

2 news

Ashdown hints at Labour PR deal

DONALD MACINTYRE
Political Editor

The possibility of a new era of coalition in return for a firm commitment by Tony Blair to back reform of Britain's electoral system will be laid out tonight by Paddy Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader.

In a key speech, Mr Ashdown will imply that Labour could count on the support of the third party for more than one term if Tony Blair were to put his

weight behind proposals for proportional representation in the referendum which he has promised for the next Parliament.

In language which will inject momentum into the prospects of long-term cooperation between the two Opposition parties, Mr Ashdown said he did not believe Britain's needs could be met by a "single party." And while rejecting outright the idea of pre-election pacts, he did not rule out the sort of "mutu-

al endorsement" floated by the senior Liberal Democrat peer Lord MacNally and intended to stimulate tactical voting.

The move came as party managers moved to play down the impact of the leak of an internal "SWOT" document based on the common business practice of identifying corporate "Strengths and Weaknesses of the Team" which is notably frank about the party's needs to make some of its policies – including tax policies more watertight.

In his *Breakfast with Frost* interview yesterday Mr Ashdown said: "Given the wreckage left behind by the Conservative Party, I believe that the things that need to be done to give Britain a modern constitution, to give it a chance in the next century, to put this country right probably cannot be done in a single parliament, probably cannot be done by a single party and certainly cannot be done unless we are prepared to construct a new contract be-

tween politicians and people."

Refusing to be drawn on possible demands for Cabinet seats as a price of support for a Labour government, Mr Ashdown was careful to keep open his options between full support, issue by issue support or sitting on the Opposition benches, possibly in the event of a Tory wipeout in the general election as the main opposition party.

"At this moment the important thing is to say what you want for your country, not

whose bum sits on the leather seat in a government Daimler," he said.

But he hinted strongly that he would spell out in detail his terms for supporting a Blair administration in advance of the general election. He will say tonight that he wants the Commons to agree on electoral reform before the proposals are put to a post-legislative referendum of the British people.

Mr Ashdown also made clear that he did not want to

alienate disaffected Tory supporters who were considering turning to the Liberal Democrats in the wake of the defection of Tony MP Emma Nicholson.

A Party Political Broadcast directed at wooing disaffected Tories has been prepared for Wednesday.

"I think the Tory Party is now in terminal decay and disarray. Emma Nicholson's defection was, in my view, an event which spoke to tens of thousands across the country," he said.

IN BRIEF

Bottomey agrees to lottery talks

Virginia Bottomley, the Secretary of State for National Heritage, has agreed to meet church leaders following concern about the lottery as the lack of a winner for Saturday's jackpot raised expectations of a £40m prize next week-end for the second time this year.

Mrs Bottomley's department and the National Lottery organiser, Camelot, are still reeling from the shock of two double-rollover draws in a row and criticism of the first mega-jackpot on 11 January when three winners shared £42m.

Representatives of the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, the Methodists, the Baptist churches and the Roman Catholic churches approached Mrs Bottomley because they said the jackpot was too big. The delegation will be led by the Bishop of Liverpool, the Rt Rev David Sheppard.

The winning numbers in Saturday's draw were 23, 37, 33, 30, 25 and 5. The bonus was 3.

Religious boycott

More than 1,500 Muslim pupils at 40 schools in Kirklees, West Yorkshire, are boycotting religious education classes. Their parents believe the syllabus is too orientated toward Christianity and a Moslem leader warned that the boycott could spread across the country.

Search for walker

A major search was underway in the Scottish Highlands for a walker who failed to return to his hotel in Kingussie on Saturday. RAF Kinloss mountain rescue team and Cairngorm mountain rescue team were searching between Newtonmore and Kingussie, near the winter resort of Aviemore.

Abduction charges

Two women and three men will appear before Wigan magistrates today charged in connection with the disappearance of a three-year-old girl with her mother after she was placed in foster care by Wigan social services. The girl went missing on Wednesday during a surprised visit to her parents at a family centre in Platt Bridge. She was found safe at a house in Salford, Greater Manchester on Friday.

Newbury protest

Chainsaw workers on the Newbury bypass site will be confronted by messages from children asking them to spare the trees today. Dozens of young children, as young as five, joined their parents for a Friends of the Earth "tree dressing" demonstration of the weekend, tying ribbons around the oaks and silver birches and pinning poems and letters to them.

Yacht adventure

A British yachtswoman attempting to sail 27,000 miles solo and non-stop the "wrong-way" round the world completed a dangerous short-cut through the Le Maire Strait in the South Atlantic. Samantha Brewster, 29, who was expected to round Cape Horn early today, is racing in the 6th *Heath Insured* to beat the record of 161 days set by Mike Golding in 1994.

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Books of the *Independent* are available from *Harcourt International, telephone 0171-538 6288*.



At home: Jack Dromey and Harriet Harman go to great lengths to make time for their children

was a key figure in the bitter Grunwick dispute in the late 1970s and is now a good deal more likely to use his media skills and powers of argument to further the cause of his members than foment a strike.

But although they are both ambitious and energetic, they are also notably active parents, taking care to return home whenever possible and ensuring that one parent is present on evenings when the other – because of the demands of the job – is not.

Their comfortable hut un-

nostalgic family house in Herne Hill, according to friends, is pleasantly child centred, with plenty of school art on the walls. Harry, 13, Joseph, 11 and Amy, 9, have never been shooed away just because an adult happens to turn up.

And although they have a network of close friends within the party – mainly, though not exclusively, modernisers – they are not grand socialisers in the manner of the late 1950s set of up-and-coming Labour politicians.

"Change would be a fine thing," Ms Harman told an in-

terviewer last year. "Could you tell me when we last went out?"

They are just not flashy "fine wine and rich food" types. In the same interview, Ms Harman described her principles of family life as "militant" – running the household for the good of the greatest number.

Her supporters point out, firstly that St Olave's is a state school, and in a neighbouring borough; secondly, that while Labour is against more selective schools, it has effectively made clear that it will not seek the abolition of existing ones, so that

her decision is not "in conflict" with Labour policy.

One of her difficulties now, at least internally, will be private anger from those Labour politicians who send their own children to comprehensive schools because they feel for party reasons they have to, and so, in some cases, putting political goals above pure family ones.

They may therefore resent Ms Harman's decision to do the opposite.

She has proved an effective and hard-working campaigner, probably now with her ide-

al brief. She deserves a good deal of credit for toughening out demands for an unrealistic figure for the national minimum wage while establishing an ideologically credible case for setting one.

Regarded by Tony Blair as a star, she is certainly on course for high Cabinet office. A first class presenter, she has an engaging sense of humour. Now she may have to draw quite deeply on all her qualities to ensure that she remains known as the able and committed politician she undoubtedly is.

Her decision is not "in conflict" with Labour policy.

She deserves a good

Radical plan for two-tier state pensions

A radical plan for a two-tier pension scheme is due to be unveiled this week as pressure grows for reform of the provision of retirement income.

After a two-year study, the Retirement Income Inquiry is expected to recommend tomorrow a safety net state pension backed up by a top-up scheme with compulsory minimum contributions from employees and employers.

Publication of the independent inquiry's report coincides with a survey showing that millions of Britons of working age have no idea what their pension is likely to be.

And yesterday Frank Field, the Labour chairman of the Commons social security committee who has proposed radical reform of the welfare state, warned that people should be made to set aside 15 per cent of their income for pensions.

Writing in the *Sunday Mirror*, he said increased saving was the only way to get round public resistance to paying higher taxes to maintain pension levels.

"We are spending fewer years at work, retiring earlier and living longer. We will have adequate pensions only if we set aside more of today's income for tomorrow," he said.

The Retirement Income Inquiry was set up under a former Treasury mandarin, Sir John

Anson, amid concern about how to fund the pensions of a rapidly ageing population.

The number of people of working age for each person of pension age will have fallen to 2.7 by 2030 from 3.3 in 1991. At present basic state retirement pensions for some 10 million people cost £26bn a year, but by 2030 the basic pension is forecast to cost £42bn a year.

Sir John's committee – drawn from business, consumer groups, trade unions, the City and the pensions industry – is expected to recommend all pensioners should be guaranteed a state-backed minimum income in retirement through a new assured pension. Pensioners whose income was below the minimum would receive extra payments from the state.

Employers and employees would also be required to make at least minimum contributions to an individual's pension fund, either through a company scheme, personal pension or a new national scheme.

The need for a public debate

on pensions was highlighted

by the publication yesterday of a survey by the insurer Eagle Star, a leading provider of retirement income schemes.

It showed fewer than half the people over 18 (46 per cent) had any idea of the pension they could expect in retirement.

Wild boy brings dreams to life

TAMSEN BLANCHARD
Paris



John Galliano: Fantasy

John Galliano last night took a French bourgeois institution – the house of Givenchy – and turned it upside down with his first collection since taking over at the helm of the legendary couturier last July.

The Givenchy customers of old will be looking elsewhere for their neat suits and elegant evening gowns from now on, because the British designer's debut collection was aimed at a whole new class of customer, including Marissa Berenson – granddaughter of the great spaghetti- and Paloma Picasso.

Tina Turner sat enraptured throughout and there were dolorous signs flashing in her eyes as she was swept backstage for a closer look at actress satin ballgowns with 12ft trains, deceptively simple plain black smoking suits, oriental kimono opera coats, lime green ballgowns and bright red and orange column dresses, made of sari silk. Model Kirsten McNeeny bowed to the rock star's feet at the end of the show to plant a kiss firmly on her lips.

The gentle and low-key house of Givenchy – not Kate Moss or Stella Tennant, but an unknown 16-year-old American, plucked by Galliano from a film audition. Ramsey Jones, from Tampa, Florida, has signed an exclusive contract.

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Murdered mother 'fled to women's refuge'

IAN MacKINNON

A mother who was killed along with her four children had sought sanctuary in a refuge for battered women in another city after fleeing the family home, it emerged yesterday.

The woman, aged 35, who died on Saturday after she was stabbed in the car park of Birmingham New Street railway station, had moved 150 miles from

the multi-racial area of Montpelier, Bristol.

She died in a row with a man as her two-and-a-half-year-old son, who was later found strangled in the back of a car, was due to be handed over as part of a custody arrangement.

Several hours later police broke down the door of the family's home in West Grove, Bristol, and found the bodies of

three other sisters, aged 14, 11 and nine, dead in their beds.

Last night a 38-year-old man, believed to be the woman's husband, was still being questioned by detectives in Birmingham, after being treated in hospital for cuts to his wrists.

Two other boys, believed to be from the same family, escaped the tragedy and were being cared for by their grandparents.

Detectives know the man and woman met at noon on Saturday, when the child was passed to the man at New Street station. In the next two hours the young boy was strangled and left in the car before his mother was stabbed to death.

Yesterday, a businessman told how he tried to save the woman, launching himself at her attacker with his bag until a po-

lice officer disarmed him. Harry Robinson, 48, a financial consultant who served in the Royal Signals regiment, was meeting his wife at the station.

"As I came out of the station I scanned across the car park for my wife's car and I could see directly in front of me an Asian man with a woman at his feet," he said. "He appeared to be punching her and kicking her. I was going to say something to

him, shout at him, when I realised there was a very large knife in his hand. I ran towards him, and as I did so, I raised my bag and threw it at him. That knocked him back only about 6ft, against a car."

"He still had the knife in his hand, he came forward again and I thought he was going to come for me. I lifted my bag to defend myself but he totally ignored me and went towards the

woman again. I launched forward and threw my bag at him, which knocked him back again."

"Then the police officer arrived at my side and was shouting at him. I don't know whether he dropped the knife or whether she hit him but the knife fell to the ground."

PC Jill Spencer, 21, gave the woman first aid as other officers arrested the man. The woman was taken to hospital but was

pronounced dead on arrival. Detective Superintendent Malcolm Ross, leading the inquiry, said: "The whole issue is very probably domestic."

He said the woman had left her Bristol home months ago and moved to the refuge in Edgbaston, south of Birmingham's city centre. "She was living in a refuge to try to give her some respite from some on-going domestic problems," he said.

Intensive care crisis: Desperately sick children pay the price as health managers struggle to balance books

Death of a child returns to haunt the NHS

LIZ HUNT and JASON KERRIGAN

This week the ghost of Baby Barber returned to haunt the health service. Few people will remember his short, troubled life, but for the 57 days David Barber survived in the winter of 1987, he was at the centre of a political furore.

His case was a major factor in the Government review of the NHS which prompted sweeping reforms and resulted in the introduction of the internal market.

Baby Barber was the desperately sick child whose urgent heart operation was postponed five times because of a shortage of intensive care nurses at the Birmingham Children's Hospital. When eventually he had his operation, he lived just 11 days.

Nine years on, as the *Independent's* survey reveals, there are many potential Baby Barbers being denied a bed in paediatric intensive care units around the country. Some children have died, ironically, the changes within the NHS now work against the Government taking action to resolve the problems. It is, health ministers argue, a matter for individual trusts to resolve by balancing their budgets.

But as the survey shows, demand far outstrips supply. It is worse in the winter and has been aggravated during the past two months by the meningitis scare, but virtually every hospital we spoke to reported problems throughout the year. The situation nationally is becoming increasingly desperate.

At St James's University Hospital in Leeds, a spokesman said that some cancer treatments had been postponed because "we have been unable to cope" with the demand from very sick children. "We haven't turned anyone away although we have received two patients



Short and troubled life: David Barber lived for just 57 days, and his death following heart surgery postponed five times prompted a political furore over paediatric care

from hospitals in Manchester. We have 11 beds in use in ICU [intensive care unit] but have 18 available to us which we can't use because we can't afford it."

At the Leeds General Infirmary children have been turned away "frequently in the past few months, often one a day," a spokesman said. "One kid was brought here DOA [dead on arrival] from Manchester. There are five paediatric ICU beds. It would be a big problem for us to find staff for any new beds."

In London, St Mary's Hospital has had to refuse admission to 41 children with

meningitis in the past year. Two died in December after the hospital could not find beds for them, Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children is under added pressure because of its specialist status. However, of 19 ICU beds only 11 are open, largely because of staffing problems. About 150 children have been turned away this year.

At the Brighton Health Care NHS Trust, seven children have been turned away in the last three months, one with meningitis. A spokesman said: "We could not find the extra staff to cope even if we had more beds."

The Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital at Alder Hey, said it has had to turn children away on "several occasions". There are 11 staff vacancies in paediatric IC at Manchester

At the Bristol Children's and St Michael's Hospital, three children were refused treatment in November and 18 in December. One little boy was taken to Birmingham last month because there were no beds; a spokeswoman said: "We have 12 beds in [paediatric] intensive care of which there are 10 currently in use. We are having difficulty recruiting staff."

The Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital at Alder Hey, said it has had to turn children away on "several occasions".

At Newcastle General Hospital a spokeswoman said there had

been no refusals as such but "we are often having to send kids on after initial assessment and emergency treatment". In Birmingham paediatric IC cases are "juggled" between the Children's Hospital, Heartlands, and the City Hospital, by an emergency beds bureau. "We are coping," a spokeswoman said. But Babula Sethia, clinical director of special services, said that there are still those who cannot get access to care.

Nottingham City Hospital and Queen's Medical Centre which together provide intensive care for children in the city said they have turned 11 away since the start of November.

In Belfast, the Royal Hospital for Sick Children said it is dealing with emergencies only. "We have eight ICU beds and operate at almost 100 per cent capacity," a spokeswoman said.

In Scotland, Glasgow Children's Hospital at Yorkhill, described the situation as "extremely busy" but said no children had yet been turned away.

At Edinburgh Sick Children's NHS Trust, a spokeswoman said that no children were refused care but "that is not to say we have enough beds".

Do you ever feel that you can't keep up with the news? That, with the best will in the world, the intricacies of NHS reforms, the timetable of the Bosnian peace process and the problems of Terry Venables escape you? In short, have you lost the plot?

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Tomorrow: Britain's politics and policy

Wednesday: The state of the world

Thursday: Arts, sport and broadcasting



Survivors: Caroline Harrison and Steve Nicholson

Love kept couple afloat after ferry sank

A British couple last night described how their love for each other kept them going as they swam in shark-infested waters for 20 hours after their ferry sank off the Indonesian coast.

Steve Nicholson asked 24-year-old Caroline Harrison to marry him when her spirits began to fail after 10 hours surrounded by bodies in the sea.

The couple promised each other they would survive as they clung to each other for an-

other 10 hours before they were rescued.

Mr Nicholson, 34, said: "I told her we should get married if we got to land and she said 'Yes'." He added: "I don't think we would have survived if we had not had each other. Caroline kept me going and I kept her going."

They were among only 47 people to be found alive after the cement-carrying ferry sank off Banda Aceh with 210

people on board on Friday night. Rescuers recovered 50 bodies, including one identified only as a 32-year-old Irish woman, named Margaret, by the time the search was called off last night.

The Britons, who are both from Eltham, south London, were treated in hospital for the effects of swallowing sea water. They were later taken to a hotel in Banda Aceh and the Foreign Office said they were still

in a state of shock following their ordeal.

The couple had been together for four years, the last two of which they had spent backpacking around Australia and Asia. Mr Nicholson told ITN that they planned to return to Britain as soon as possible.

Talking about his marriage proposal, he said: "It was not a classic, romantic proposal. I turned to her and said, 'When we get home, we'll get married.'

The wreckage of the ferry was also found last night, renewing hope that some people may still be alive inside.

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Fraud office director to step down

JOHN EISENHAMMER
Financial Editor

George Staple is to step down as director of the Serious Fraud Office when his contract runs out next year, in an attempt to defuse the explosion of criticism prompted by the outcome of the Maxwell case.

The announcement came as the future of the SFO was yet again thrown into doubt, as senior politicians from both sides of the House called for an urgent review of the way big-time fraud is fought in Britain.

The Maxwell case, which re-

sulted in Ian and Kevin Maxwell and Larry Trachtenberg, a former financial adviser to the Maxwell empire, being found not guilty of defrauding pension funds, has capped an increasingly unhappy period of tenure for Mr Staple, as rumblings of discontent have grown louder among senior SFO case directors. Mr Staple's five-year contract ends in April 1997.

He is resisting calls for his departure after the Maxwell case, which lasted four years and cost taxpayers £25m. "I don't think there is anything in this case which should make me consider-

ing my position," he said. "Our record is a respectable one. I don't think we should be judged on the result of one case."

An SFO source said yesterday that it had always been Mr Staple's intention to step down next year.

Mr Staple came close to resigning last summer during the furore over new revelations which cast a poor light on his, and the SFO's, handling of the prosecution of Roger Levitt. Facing multiple charges of defrauding investors of £34m, carrying a possible jail term of between seven and ten years, Levitt was even-

tually sentenced to 180 hours of community service.

The Government was embarrassed when it had to concede that earlier answers to Parliament on the affair had not been accurate, and Mr Staple had to apologise to the influential Treasury Select Committee for giving it incorrect evidence. His conduct was heavily censured by the committee and later last year its report on financial regulation criticised the SFO.

Conservatives on the committee have called loudly for a rethink on combating complex City fraud. Matthew Carrington,

a Tory member of the committee, said: "This latest embarrassment over Maxwell forcefully raises questions about whether fraud prosecution might not be better handled by those bodies responsible for regulating financial services."

Although it made no formal recommendation, the committee is known to have leaned towards an option which would see the chief regulator, the Securities and Investments Board, also given the power to take investigations through to prosecution. But the lack of any prospect of any change in the law this side

of an election meant the option was not pushed.

Labour has committed a future government to a full review of the SFO's operations and is also considering giving the regulators power of prosecution. It is now time urgently to examine the way in which we prosecute complicated City crimes and the role of the SFO, Alastair Darling, Labour's City spokesman, said.

The loss of the Maxwell case has exacerbated disenchantment among the SFO's upper ranks. Senior officers believe Mr Staple's defence of the SFO has

been inadequate, exposing his inexperience in criminal legal matters. There is little support internally for him to carry on.

Mr Staple, and the SFO, received decisive backing from Sir Nicholas Lyell, the Attorney-General, however. "If it did not exist, I am sure we would have to invent it," he said of the SFO after the Maxwell verdict.

After a Cabinet review last year, the Government concluded there was no better alternative to the SFO and said it should be reinforced as the centre of expertise for all big fraud cases.

Train doors in 'urgent' safety review

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR

Hundreds of InterCity trains may have to be modified to stop passengers hurting themselves by jumping out of door windows only a year after £17m was spent on making train doors safer.

Great Western Trains, soon to be privatised, is examining the possibility of sealing up door windows following the enquiry into the Maidenhead train fire in which one man died. Other InterCity operators are expected to follow suit. Ian Jones was killed by a train in September when he jumped out of the window of an InterCity train after a fire broke out.

Last week's inquiry report by the Health and Safety Executive criticised emergency procedures for evacuating passengers from trains and recommended a review of emergency equipment and facilities.

All 1,900 coaches in InterCity's fleet have just been fitted with central-locking devices which prevent passengers from opening the doors until the guard has activated the mechanism. The modification may have saved many lives in the Maidenhead incident because it prevented panicking passengers from jumping into the path of the train that killed Mr Jones. However, safety experts are now having to consider whether it may be better to lock the door windows and refit internal handles which, of course, could only be operated once the guard had activated the central door mechanism. A safety consultant working for the railways said: "It is amazing this was not done in the first place. It is a typical half-cock BR scheme."

A series of other incidents has prompted Great Western, which operated the train involved in the Maidenhead fire, to look "urgently" at the safety of its doors. The worst incident occurred last summer when a woman, Jennifer Dean, was saying goodbye to her boyfriend who was leaning out of the door window. She was dragged under the train and was seriously injured, losing a leg.

Children's favourites: Historic characters up for auction as technology develops multi-million pound profits

Sooty sweeps the board in race for rights

JOJO MOYES

Some of Britain's favourite platinum-selling acts are due to change hands within days, in deals worth millions of pounds in royalties and video sales.

It is not Blor or Oasis swapping labels, but it would be fair to say they are popular with the young. Sales of Sooty's last two videos reached 1.3 million, Noddy has his own "fanzone" and Winnie the Pooh is a worldwide film star.

Sooty, the pelulant glove puppet, is said to be "as certain as possible" to be bought out by Sooty International, his management company, in a deal rumoured to be worth £4m.

This would mean the end of his association with the Corbett family, with whom he has worked hand-in-glove since 1952.

Publishers Reed Elsevier confirmed yesterday that bidding was in progress for the many of the rights to Thomas the Tank Engine, Winnie the Pooh and Babar the Elephant, as part of the sale of its consumer books arm.

"There's an auction in place. There are a number of serious players and they are enthusiastic about the business," said a spokesman yesterday.

One of those bidders is rumoured to be Carlton Communications, who were said to be negotiating a multi-million-

pound deal to buy the copyright to the Bear of Very Little Brain. Meanwhile the copyright to Noddy, for whom the merchandising alone is worth £42m, is said to be "within weeks" of changing hands.

Salar Fazad of the corporate finance arm of Price Waterhouse, which is handling the sale of all Enid Blyton's copyrights, said it was fine-tuning a deal with a "preferred purchaser".

Despite the advent of computer games, these characters—the youngest of whom is at least middle-aged—are extremely lucrative thanks to video, computer technology and merchandising.

"What's key about this industry at the moment is that technology is changing at such a rapid rate that there's all sorts of outlets," Mr Fazad said. "These are all brand names; the parents knew them and they're still popular with the children."

Sales of Enid Blyton books number more than 8 million copies a year, with translations into 27 languages. Noddy alone has sold over 100 million books since his birth in 1949.

Partly because of Noddy's huge popularity, BBC Children's Video has become the second largest video label after Walt Disney. On the back of the television series, there are 300 licensed products".

Competition is also thought to be especially fierce for



Child's play: Sooty videos have grossed £10m and the puppet may soon be sold for £4m

Photographs: Edward Sykes

Thomas, who has grown into a £2bn worldwide business since his creation by the Rev Wilbert Awdry 50 years ago.

Winnie the Pooh, meanwhile, achieved celluloid fame after

Disney bought the rights to transfer the books to film and to market products based on the screen characters in the 1960s.

Sooty's likely buyer, Sooty International, has helped create a multi-million pound industry around him. Videos such as Learn to Read With Sooty and Learn Simple Arithmetic With Sooty have hit 1.3 million, grossing £10m.

The sale has come about because Sooty's partner, 48-year-old Matthew Corbett, is said to be keen to retire. His late father, Harry, would no doubt be gratified at the comfortable retirement that Sooty's efforts promise for his son. He bought the puppet more than 40 years ago to amuse Matthew—for the equivalent of 37 and a half pence.

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Thomas has grown into a £2bn worldwide business since his creation by the Rev Wilbert Awdry 50 years ago.

Winnie the Pooh, meanwhile, achieved celluloid fame after

Disney bought the rights to transfer the books to film and to market products based on the screen characters in the 1960s.

Sooty's likely buyer, Sooty International, has helped create a multi-million pound industry around him. Videos such as Learn to Read With Sooty and Learn Simple Arithmetic With Sooty have hit 1.3 million, grossing £10m.

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news

Shortage of students worries legal profession

STEPHEN WARD
Legal Affairs Correspondent

Fewer graduates than ever are applying to solicitors because of declining salaries and career prospects, the latest figures from the Law Society show.

Applications for the one-year compulsory postgraduate courses starting this September closed last month, and Law Society figures show that the numbers applying are down by a quarter in three years, and 15 per cent since last year. For the first time in living memory, the profession is facing a shortage of demand. Many of the one-year postgraduate courses are running with empty places this year, and from September there will be even bigger shortfalls.

Applications for places have traditionally outstripped supply. But a virtual drying up of grants to fund the one-year postgraduate courses, coupled with a declining chance of earning enough in future to repay overdrafts, is blamed for the change. Fees are £5,000 for the year, and students - many already burdened with debts from their degree course - have to find another year's living expenses, too.

Applicants for next year's courses have dropped from 8,959 to 7,595. If the same proportion as usual drop out before starting, and the same percentage fail their exams at the end, there will only be a few more successful graduates than training places, currently about 4,000 a year.

Because most graduates are not completely flexible about where they will work, or what type of work they want, the profession believes it needs a 10 per cent surplus to fill all training places.

The calibre of candidate has apparently fallen already - whereas only one in fourteen used to fail the exams, now one in five do so.

Only five years ago the profession was gearing up for expansion, licensing many of the

new universities to provide legal practice courses in addition to the traditional sole provider, the College of Law. But the optimism of the late Eighties was tempered by the realities of the recession, particularly in house sales, which hit conveyancing income hard.

Under the profession's rules, a student cannot qualify as a solicitor until they have spent two years in an "apprenticeship" with a firm, on what is known as a training contract. Initially, when the expanded courses began to come through in 1993, there was a huge surplus of postgraduates with no training contracts to go to. Their experience has deterred their successors.

Paradoxically, the news comes at a time when the profession is trying to find a way to impose artificial limits on the numbers coming in. Martin Mears, president of the Law Society, has suggested imposing tests to weed out some applicants for the courses.

However, John Randall, the Law Society's director in charge of training, warned that there was a risk of a shortage of high-street practitioners. He said that local firms, which had already been squeezed by the recession, faced an uncertain future because of legal aid and divorce reforms, and few could afford to take on trainees.

He said it was "extremely regrettable" for the profession that only the children of richer parents could now afford to become solicitors.

Richard Holbrook, head of the College of Law - which provides more postgraduate courses than all the others put together - said that 30 years ago it was mostly the children of the wealthy who were able to become solicitors. By 1970 it had become more egalitarian, and now it was going back again.

"If you have been paying school fees for years, you won't mind paying £5,000," he said. "Market forces are taking their effect."

Birds at risk: New reserve offers little sanctuary to wildlife driven out by Cardiff Bay barrage



Swallowed up: Cardiff Bay mudflats provide an irreplaceable feeding site for wading birds, which will not be reproduced in the planned reserve... Photograph: Bob Stratton

Fears for waders on doomed mudflats

NICHOLAS SCHOON

The Government has promised to create an "internationally important" new bird reserve beside the Severn Estuary, to compensate for one it is completely destroying in the construction of the Cardiff Bay barrage.

But conservation groups say the new reserve, near Newport, covering one-and-a-half square miles, will provide a feeding ground for only a fraction of the wading birds who feed on the mudflats of Cardiff Bay. These will be submerged for ever once the barrage is completed next year.

It seems likely the Government will end up owning half, or less, of the new reserve's land. The rest will stay in the hands of farmers paid to manage it in a way that favours birdlife. Critics say that provides no guarantee it will remain a reserve.

The designated land, at Uskmouth and Goldcliff, on the Gwent Levels, consists of grazing meadows and the grounds of a redundant power station, where huge quantities of fuel ash have been dumped into lagoons. A variety of rare plants and insects live in the drainage ditches that criss-cross the fields, and the land is already a Government-designated Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The plan is to turn the power station grounds into reed beds and create saline lagoons, where the salty tidal waters of the estuary mix with fresh water. Announcing the £5.7m scheme last week, the Welsh Secretary William Hague said it was a "unique and exciting opportunity".

It is the third area mooted for a reserve to compensate for the loss of Cardiff Bay. Two earlier ones fell by the wayside, as

the Government feared it would have to seek compulsory purchase powers to acquire the land, and then be ruled out of the order at a public inquiry. At this site it has reached agreement already with the power station's owner, National Power.

Peter Firth, chairman of a coalition of local and national wildlife groups opposed to the construction of the barrage, fears only a few dozen redshank and dunlin would be attracted to the new reserve in winter, as it lacks high mudflats. More than 4,000 of these waders, a significant proportion of their UK population, winter in Cardiff Bay but will soon have to move.

"Maybe the new reserve will provide a home for substantial numbers of other species, but we can't be sure," he said. "You can't make up for the destruction of important habitat like the Cardiff Bay mudflats."

Army land provides safe haven for stone curlew

NICHOLAS SCHOON

The stone curlew is a strange bird. It is a long-legged wader which cannot stand the wet and humus insects and earthworms at night with its large yellow eyes.

It is also one of Britain's most endangered species; its breeding population has fallen by 85 per cent in the past 30 years and only 166 pairs are known to have bred here last year. The global population runs into tens of thousands but the bird is in decline across Europe, and we have adopted it as our emblem, to represent all the threatened wildlife covered in this series.

A distant relative of the more common curlew, the stone curlew arrives here in April from its winter homes in north Africa and Spain. Almost all the British birds are found on or around Ministry of Defence training grounds on Salisbury Plain, or on the Breckland, a big sandy area of heath which straddles the Norfolk/Suffolk border.

Changes in farming are thought to be the main causes of the species' decline. Most of the pastures where it once fed and nested have been converted to arable fields. Most stone curlews now nest between rows of spring-sown crops such as sugar beet and barley, and face extreme danger from tractors.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and English Nature have stone-curlew watchers who place warning markers near dozens of nest sites. Farmers are compensated for keeping away.

The stone curlew is one of



Losing ground: The stone curlew thrives on bare land

116 endangered or declining species for which rescue plans have been proposed by a steering group of Government scientists, academics, and wildlife organisations. The aim, at a cost of £105,000 a year, is to double the number of breeding pairs in Britain by 2010. This can be done by giving farmers better incentives to manage land in a way which favours the stone curlew and by asking the army to do the same on its training grounds.

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news

Press born again the night Fleet Street died

BARRIE CLEMENT
Labour Editor

Ten years ago this week, Rupert Murdoch took Britain's national newspaper industry by the throat, shook it and deposited it at Wapping just east of London's Tower Bridge.

In one weekend, Mr Murdoch put the all-powerful print unions to the sword and – much to their incredulity – produced and distributed his four titles without their assistance.

Along with the historic defeat of the miners in the coal strike which ended a year earlier, it was a defining moment in Thatcherism. Rarely has an industry been transformed with such speed and audacity.

On the night of 24 January, the most productive presses in Fleet Street fell silent for the last time. Twenty-four hours later and three miles to the east "Fortress Wapping", surrounded by razor wire and patrolled by security guards, printed the *News of the World* and the *Sunday Times*. A day later the *Times* and the *Sun* followed.

National newspapers were never the same again. Mr Murdoch's coup enabled the rest of Fleet Street to dispense with their antique production methods, even some looked down their noses at his methods. In addition, new titles such as the *Independent* would arguably never have been launched.

Without the intervention of the "chapel fathers" of the Sogat and NGA print unions, journalists and advertising staff were able to cast aside their typewriters. Keying straight into computer screens they could set their copy in print.

Only Eddy Shah and his *Today* newspaper had been able to bring new technology to national newspapers. But Mr Shah was a minnow to Mr Murdoch's shark.

The weekend flit to Wapping provoked a year-long conflict which became a cause célèbre among union activists and led to violent picket line clashes.



Flash point: News International's move to Wapping led to violent clashes between police and pickets

Print union leaders and the chapel fathers had been outwitted. The 5,000 print workers had voted to strike in protest at the conditions demanded by management negotiators to run the Wapping plant – and they were dismissed. A day before the Fleet Street presses stopped, Mr Murdoch twisted the knife by insisting that the deal – including total flexibility, a no-strike clause and powers to hire and fire at will – would have to apply to the old sites be bad no intention of maintaining. A union offer to give him most of what he wanted came too late.

Before 1985 Fleet Street had been a byword for restrictive practices. There was overmanning and the élite of the printers were on wages equivalent to £100,000 a year today. But proprietors acceded to union demands because the high costs kept out competitors.

The Wapping complex had been built some 10 years before Mr Murdoch's patience snapped. Unions wanted their old conditions preserved if they moved east, causing a decade of desultory negotiations. However, a year or so before the dispute, Mr Murdoch began recruiting for Wapping under the guise of the *London Post* – a newspaper he had no intention of publishing.

The subterfuge took on the atmosphere of international espionage. Hand-picked executives and journalists from the "chapel fathers" of the Sogat and NGA print unions, journalists and advertising staff were able to cast aside their typewriters. Keying straight into computer screens they could set their copy in print.

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'Watchdog' uncovers a lethal trade in knives

Traders are selling lethal combat knives to teenagers without asking any questions despite growing public concern over a spate of stabbings, according to a television investigation.

The nationwide police amnesty on knives – the results of which will be released tomorrow – has had little impact on unrestricted trade in the weapons, according to evidence gathered by the BBC1 programme *Watchdog* to be broadcast tonight.

Watchdog sent 16-year-old Steven Hale to Liverpool city

centre where he bought combat knives with serrated blades almost seven inches long. Although it was not illegal for the shops to sell him the knives, none of the shopkeepers questioned Steven's age or motives.

Detective Inspector John Colligan from Wallasey, Merseyside said: "If [traders] could see the horrendous injuries caused in knife attacks they would consider restrictions as to who they sell knives to."

Home Office figures attribute one third of all killings last year to knife attacks.

DAILY POEM

I Leave This At Your Ear for Nessie Dunsmuir

By W. S. Graham

I leave this at your ear for when you wake,
A creature in its abstract cage asleep.
Your dreams blindfold you by the light they make.

The owl called from the naked-woman tree
As I came down by the Kyle farm to hear
Your house silent by the speaking sea.

I have come late but I have come before
Later with slaked steps from stone to stone
To hope to find you listening for the door.

I stand in the ticking room. My dear, I take
A moth kiss from your breath. The shore gulls cry.
I leave this at your ear for when you wake.

William Sydney Graham, who died 10 years ago this month, was an important figure in 20th-century poetry. He was an absolute master of his craft – in many ways a "poet's poet" – but never properly reached the audience he deserved and his contribution to British poetry has escaped public notice. He lived for most of his adult life in Cornwall, and had been born in Greenock on the Clyde and as a young man worked as an engineer. A first collection *Cage without Grievance* was published in 1942 and six more followed. T.S. Eliot wrote of his fifth *The Nightfishing*, "some of these poems – by their sustained power, their emotional depth and maturity and their superb technical skill – may well be among the most important poetic achievements of our time". His Selected Poems are published this week by Faber at £9.99.

To mark the 10th anniversary of his death, Radio 4's Kaleidoscope will present a special profile on Tuesday 30 January. There will also be a memorial event at the Tate Gallery, St Ives, on Tuesday 20 February.

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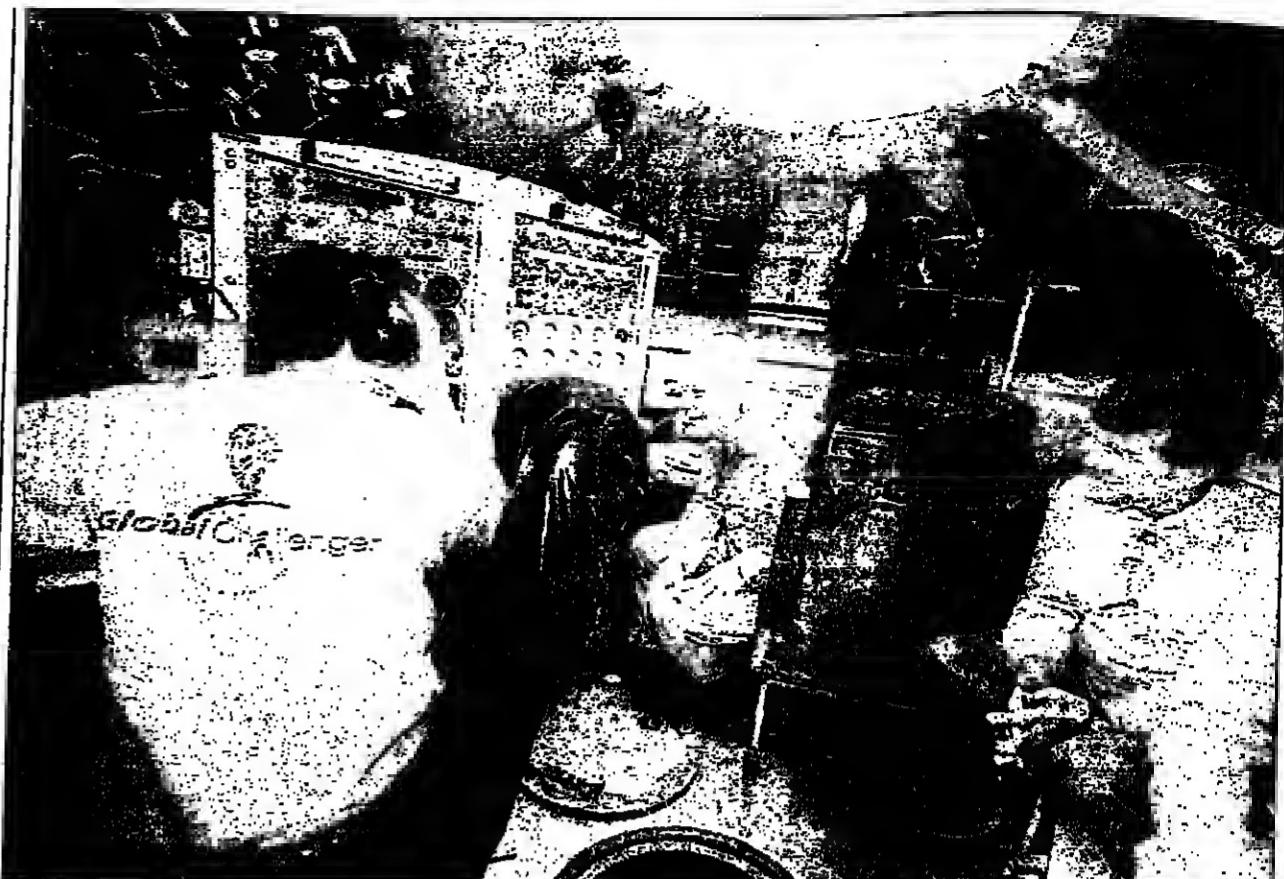
of his sacked employees however it was an evil genius. Wapping had a human cost.

Union representatives talk of broken marriages, nervous breakdowns and suicides which they believe can be directly attributed to the dispute. And they accuse the police of exceeding their brief as peace-keepers in enforcing Tory labour laws designed to crush the unions.

The unions say that the pay and conditions of most involved in national newspapers have since been driven down.

There is a fascinating postscript to the story. Under present Labour Party plans, employers would have to recognise and negotiate with unions in any workplace where a majority of employees want it.

The whole process illustrated Mr Murdoch's managerial genius. From the point of view

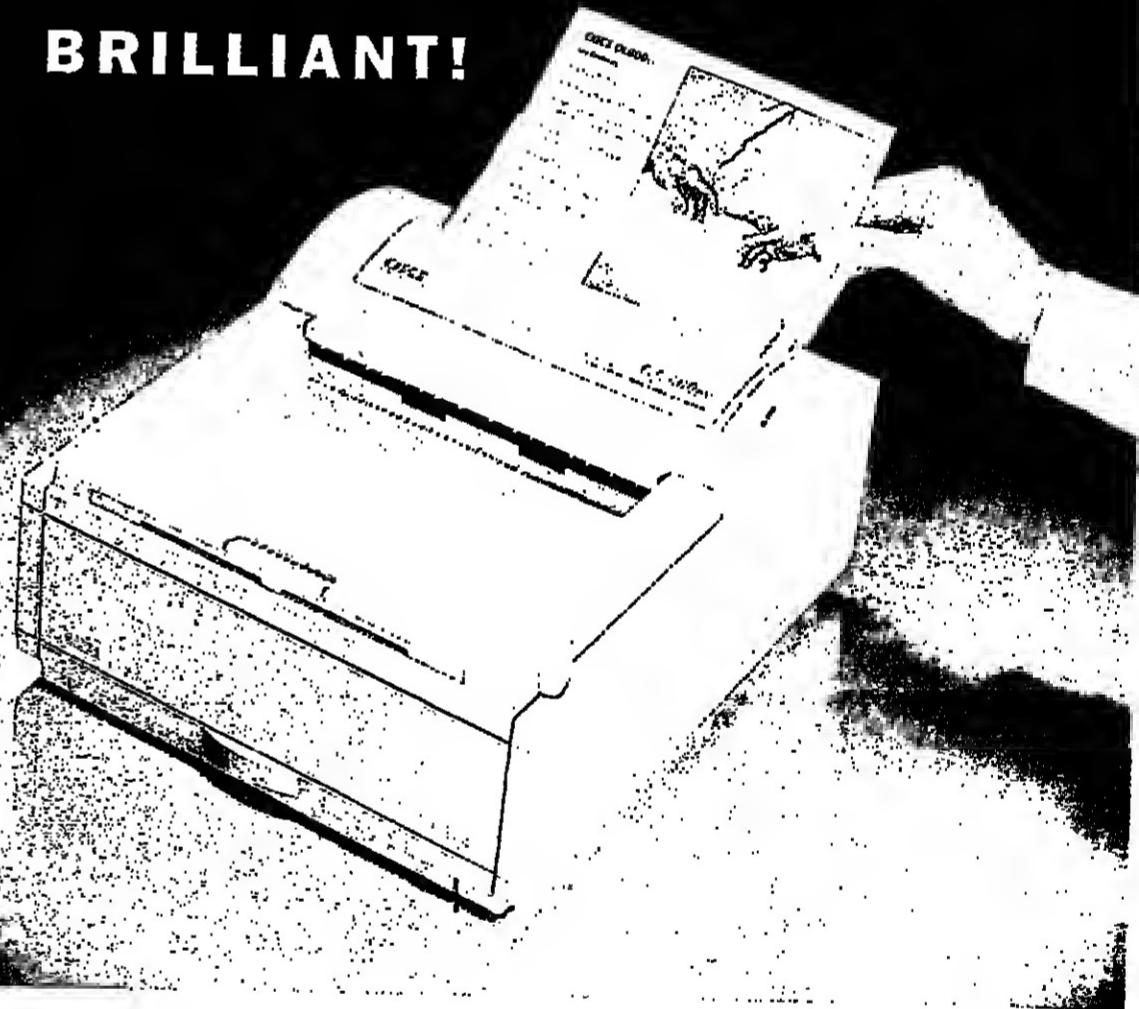


Power base: Richard Branson's team in Marrakesh preparing the capsule of his hot-air balloon for its round-the-world attempt, which has been delayed by bad weather. Rory McCarthy, centre, is one of the pilots. Photograph: John Voss

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Peace sends village fleeing for safety

CHRISTOPHER BELLAMY
Majdan

"Let us make a sign of peace." In a freezing church at Majdan, British officers shook hands with the Bosnian Croat HVO and local civilians, their breath like steam in the church's icy white interior. Fr Adolf Visatki prepared for communion.

There could have been no fiercer words. But even peace has its problems. Another round of "ethnic cleansing" has started, sanctioned by the Dayton peace agreement and encouraged by local authorities anxious to complete tidying up the map and partition Bosnia still more cleanly. It may not be the last Catholic Mass in Majdan, but most people of this Croat village, which is to be returned to Bosnian Serb rule, have left or were leaving yesterday.

At the end of the service the British commander of peace im-

Bosnia: British troops vainly urge Croats to stay in their homes on wrong side of the line

plementation troops in the area, Brigadier Richard Dannatt, tried to persuade the people to stay, but it was too late.

During almost four years of war and Serb occupation, the hundred or so families in Majdan, between Mrkonic Grad and Jace, lived unmolested. Then, last summer, the Bosnian Croat HVO, backed by the regular Croatian army, drove the Serbs north. Serb troops around Jace, fearing they might be cut off, fled, giving the Bosnian government an easy ride north as well. But under the Dayton agreement the area including Majdan will be handed back to the Serbs. All HVO forces must withdraw by 3 February and yesterday it looked as if most people from Majdan would join them.

The reasons why Bosnian

Croat villagers who survived Serb rule are suddenly anxious to leave can be seen in the villages all around. Along the road to Majdan, you pass Serb villages that have been completely burned and wrecked by the Croats, including an Orthodox church with its distinctive onion dome. The villagers of Majdan, who yesterday flew a flag saying "This is Croatia", for L-For's benefit, did nothing to stop it. When the Serbs return, they are likely to be angry. In any other circumstances, Majdan could be from a fairy tale. The houses look prosperous; steep-roofed barns overflow with chickens. "Before the war we could live with the Serbs but now we can't," said Franjo Kovacijic, 52, who was preparing to leave with his wife, Slavija, 40, their three

children, a good-natured dog and a black-and-white kitten. They were loading possessions onto a truck, which looked as if it belonged to the HVO.

Franjo had been a refugee before, from Mrkonic Grad. He had moved into this brother's house, and now they were moving everything to Glamoč, a town which has been assigned to the Croat/Muslim zone, where they had somewhere to go. "We'll take the cat and dog too," he said. "We wouldn't like them to suffer here."

In Glamoč, the houses formerly owned by Serbs are lying empty. "I've got a Serb friend down the road," said Franjo. "The only person, apart from Fr Visatki, who wanted to stay, was Franjo Delik, 47, a blacksmith who lives with his 75-year-old mother and some nieces and nephews. "Where

Slavija began to cry. "I went to Glamoč yesterday to see our new house. It had no doors, no windows, nothing..."

But at least the Kowalcies have somewhere to go. The Serb mayors of Mrkonic Grad and Sipovo visited their old towns on Saturday, and news of the visit had got back to Majdan. The Serbs had tried to reassure the Croats but the Croats started haranguing them, which made the Serbs less reassuring.

The use of HVO forces and comments from many people suggest the local Croat authorities are trying to get people to leave. The only person, apart from Fr Visatki, who wanted to stay, was Franjo Delik, 47, a blacksmith who lives with his 75-year-old mother and some nieces and nephews. "Where

else would I go?" he said. But then his mother interrupted him. "He'll go," she said. "We're not staying. Not on your life. Don't listen to him."

"I have placed my soldiers in this village to give some protection but my soldiers are only here in support of the Dayton agreement, which contains your rights. The choice is yours."

"I have in my possession just two books at the moment," Brig Dannatt added. "Put your faith in God - His word is written down in the Bible, and put your faith in the Dayton peace agreement, because that has your human rights and your future wrapped up in it. I hope very much you will be here in church this time next week."

Franjo Kowalcic reckoned everyone would leave by 3 February. Others estimated that of 100 families, 10 might stay.

The suspect had detailed knowledge that only the perpetrator or someone involved in the deed could have known," said Klaus-Dieter Schultz, Lübeck's public prosecutor.

"There were no technical devices in the area immediately surrounding the place where the fire broke out, so a technical cause was ruled out." Mr Schultz added.

Although no clear motive has been found, the man was charged with 10 counts of murder and 38 counts of attempted murder. His lawyer says the boast was misunderstood, while neighbours point out that the suspect fought shoulder to shoulder with firefighters to rescue people from the flames.

Under pressure to find a logical explanation, the authorities still seem to be clutching at straws. Their latest theory is that there may have been conflict among the different nationalities occupying the cramped space of the house, though they concede that police had never been aware of any dispute. The hostel was inhabited by Zaireans, Togolese, Lebanese, Syrians and ethnic German immigrants from Poland.

At least the neo-Nazis are for the moment off the hook, along with the stigmatised population of eastern Germany, who came under suspicion in the aftermath of the blaze. Four east Germans were held for a day without any evidence, thousands demonstrated in Lübeck and Hamburg against the extreme right, and politicians rushed to condemn the latest outbreak of racial violence.

The ultimate cause may yet turn out to be a discarded cigarette, but there is still a lesson to be learnt from Lübeck: that prejudice, in this case prejudice against the pauvre east, continues to permeate German society.

New Greek PM picks his team

Athens (Reuters) — Greece's new Prime Minister yesterday unveiled his new cabinet, making Theodoros Pangalos, a controversial figure, his Foreign Minister.

Costas Simitis kept the Economy Minister, Yannos Papandoniou, and the Finance Minister, Alexandros Papadopoulos, but brought in several prominent party reformers a spokesman announced.

The most controversial appointment was the new Foreign Minister. Theodoros Pangalos publicly insulted Germany and Italy when Greece last held the European Union presidency. In 1993 he likened Germany to "a giant with bestial force and a child's brain". He left the government of the former prime minister, Andreas Papandreou, and joined Mr Simitis's group of party reformers.

Though Mr Pangalos's confrontational style set teeth on edge while Greece held the EU presidency, he is described as more committed to European-style social democracy than Mr Papandreou.

Mr Simitis, 59, was chosen as Prime Minister last week by the Socialist group in parliament, replacing Mr Papandreou who has been in hospital since 20 November. Mr Simitis's new cabinet appeared to be a mix of Papandreou loyalists and members of his own reform camp.

Mr Simitis wants more money spent on development, more privatisation and greater compliance with EU standards.

He is expected to make big changes in the major ministries, state corporations and banks, but to keep some Papandreou traditionalists to avoid divisions in the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (Pasok) party.

He is expected to take a more pragmatic approach to Greece's fragile relations with its Balkan neighbours, Albania and the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia.

Lebanese held over Lübeck deaths

IMRE KARACS
Bonn

Germany breathed a collective sigh of relief yesterday as it became apparent that the blaze which killed 10 immigrants last Thursday in Lübeck could not have been the work of neo-Nazis.

Forensic scientists in the Baltic city established that the fire was deliberately set by someone inside the house.

As the front door was locked, only a resident could have caused the inferno. Last night police were holding a 21-year-old Lebanese man living in the house, who was said by fire-fighters to have boasted that "we were the ones".

The suspect had detailed knowledge that only the perpetrator or someone involved in the deed could have known," said Klaus-Dieter Schultz, Lübeck's public prosecutor.

"There were no technical devices in the area immediately surrounding the place where the fire broke out, so a technical cause was ruled out." Mr Schultz added.

Although no clear motive has been found, the man was charged with 10 counts of murder and 38 counts of attempted murder. His lawyer says the boast was misunderstood, while neighbours point out that the suspect fought shoulder to shoulder with firefighters to rescue people from the flames.

Under pressure to find a logical explanation, the authorities still seem to be clutching at straws. Their latest theory is that there may have been conflict among the different nationalities occupying the cramped space of the house, though they concede that police had never been aware of any dispute. The hostel was inhabited by Zaireans, Togolese, Lebanese, Syrians and ethnic German immigrants from Poland.

At least the neo-Nazis are for the moment off the hook, along with the stigmatised population of eastern Germany, who came under suspicion in the aftermath of the blaze. Four east Germans were held for a day without any evidence, thousands demonstrated in Lübeck and Hamburg against the extreme right, and politicians rushed to condemn the latest outbreak of racial violence.

The ultimate cause may yet turn out to be a discarded cigarette, but there is still a lesson to be learnt from Lübeck: that prejudice, in this case prejudice against the pauvre east, continues to permeate German society.

European gridlock: The Transport Commissioner wants new links, but protesters fear environmental disaster

Kinnock steers EU off a road to nowhere

SARAH HELM
Brussels

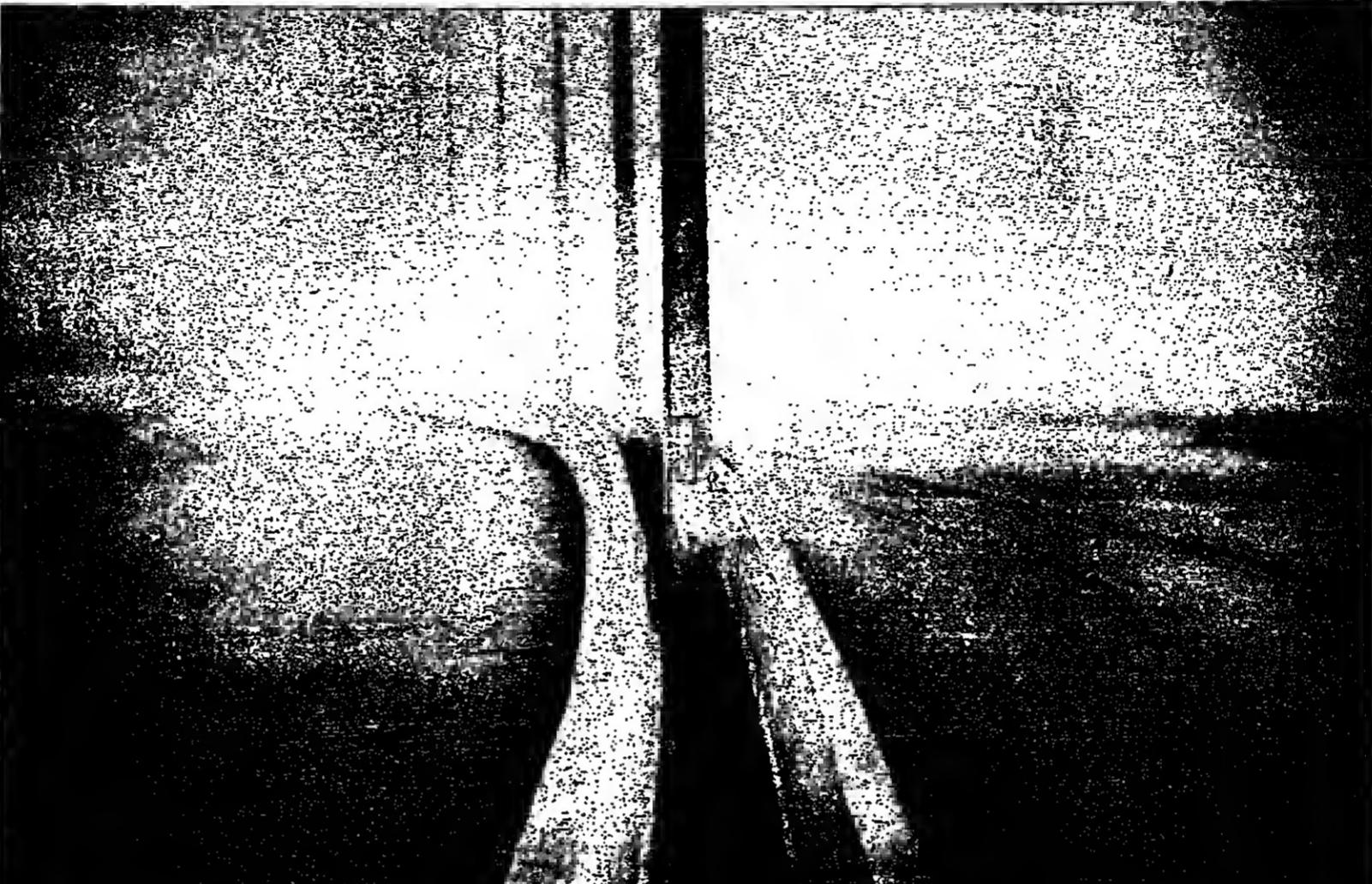
Driving back to Brussels at the New Year, Neil Kinnock got off Le Shuttle at Calais and sped up the E40 motorway. Along with every other truck and car using this prime European corridor, the EU Transport Commissioner was forced to turn off the motorway at Veurnes, and proceed along a 10km (6 mile) rat-run towards a bottleneck in the village of Adenkirke, on the Franco-Belgian border. In a line of vehicles thundering up to Rotterdam, he slowed down to pass the border where the French still do spot checks.

The creator of Europe's "citizens' network" must have despaired as he observed the glass rattle in the window of the corner boulangerie. All along this choked track, hunes foul the sea breeze, scattering pintail ducks across the ancient dunes. Just a short drive from Brussels, Mr Kinnock was snarled in European gridlock.

"Tomorrow he unveils his European 'citizens' network" scheme as part of a transport plan which was first outlined in the Maastricht treaty. The scheme envisages some 15,000km of roads, which will complete a 58,000km network. There are plans for 70,000km of railway track, including 22,000km for high-speed trains. There will be transport corridors, new inland waterways and 367 airports "of common interest". The single market and the free movement of people demands integrated networks, said the treaty.

For now, however, the plan is just a dream. All over Europe, motorways often end at frontiers and railway lines and signalling systems do not match.

The story of the missing kilometres on the E40 artery illustrates the problem. The motorway is a priority project. One of the so-called "Tens", or trans-European networks, the



The 'missing link' of unfinished road (above), which forces traffic through the border village of Adenkirke (below)

Photographs: Dillon Bryden

road is intended to link Amsterdam, Antwerp, and Brussels to Calais, the Channel tunnel and London. While much of the link is in place, the Belgians have been reluctant to spend the money to complete it, largely because, whatever the benefit for "Europe", there has been no perceived benefit for Belgian.

Already the country is questioning the value of its own national network of motorways.

Partly as a result of chaotic decentralised planning, the country has a higher proportion of roads than anywhere in Europe,

with four kilometres of road for every square kilometre of land.

The federal system means each town and region competes to have its own major road links, with little thought for the general interest. Belgian environmentalists have been swift to learn the lessons, questioning the economic benefits of the myriad of major routes which carve up countryside, benefiting only the big cities.

The fear is that European

network could have the same effect on a bigger scale. Belgium is lodged between the big powers of France and Germany, with Britain just across the water. This small state fears it would just become a transit area, criss-crossed by motorways and railways serving Europe's bigger powers.

"Belgium thinks it will become a distribution centre for Europe," says Gigi Kuneman, director of the European Federation for Transport and the Environment.

The building of Europe's transport network will see many more such battles. Lobbyists are

preparing to block the building of a new stretch of road from Veurnes to Ypres, which would take trucks thundering past First World War cemeteries.

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Lebanese held over
Lübeck deaths

international

Border skirmishes: 'Independent' writers report from both sides of the frontier on the immigration battle

Washington accused of building a Berlin Wall

TIM CORNWELL
Chula Vista, California

As midnight approaches on the border south of San Diego, the great game gets under way. Groups of mostly Mexican immigrants mill around campfires, hovering in the shadow of the corrugated-iron wall, waiting for the moment to make their run.

They watch, and are watched, by 1,500 border patrolmen. Guarding the busiest sector for



No way: US border guard arrests 'illegals' in Nevada

illegal crossings in the country, the border-patrol agents are armed with night scopes and ground sensors, backed up by old-fashioned tracking and the 100-yard sprint.

Just behind the front line, Tod Padgett zooms his night-vision camera in on a wriggling cluster of black shadows as he guides two patrols in a pincer movement. "Go into the six-ten field for me and fan south," he radios. "Got a bunch pushing up in the six-12 area." The shadow splits into a swarm of darting figures. "It turned into about 10-plus," he warns. "They're going to push up on us."

Sure enough, the figures drop down, scrabbling for cover in the arid flat land, but the patrols close in and report their catch: nine "aliens" neatly netted.

The Clinton administration announced amid great fanfare this month its latest initiative to tighten the screws on the southwest border. In the past three years President Bill Clinton has attempted to wrest the issue of resentment against illegal immigrants from Republicans who have fanned it, notably Governor Pete Wilson of California. The Republican convention comes to San Diego in August.

It is commonly said that while Senator Bob Dole can win the US presidency without California's 54 electoral votes, President Clinton cannot. That explains why border patrol agents who rode mostly in bat-tered sedans two years ago now

drive gleaming white Broncos and jolting Chevy Suburbans. Attorney-General Janet Reno promised to push the number of agents beyond their record high of 5,400, and to enlist army units and local police. Mexicans complain it is the militarisation of the border. Agents on the ground are cheerful about the political manoeuvring, because the border patrol, once the unglamorous underdog of US law-enforcement agencies, is suddenly a career full of opportunities. "Reno is popular," said Mr Padgett. "We're at the bot-



Wild frontier: Would-be illegal immigrants and border guards play a cat-and-mouse game at San Ysidro, California

Photographs: Colombe!

tom of the totem pole for such a long time." A few years ago, the border was chaotic and murderously violent, and the huge flow of immigrants virtually unimpeded. Near the Pacific coast the fringes of suburban San Diego were a short easy dash from Tijuana, Mexico. Now the scene is inevitably reminiscent of Cold War Berlin. A wall made from old military airfields and illuminated by arc lights ribbons inland.

The white Broncos wait atop the mesas. Agents are in helicopters overhead and dart around in rubber boats in the

swampy shoreline. The border patrol has its own Checkpoint Charlie on the Interstate 5 running north of San Diego to Los Angeles.

Last week dogs sniffed out a group of 30 immigrants squashed into a wooden compartment. Fired for fun and lighting, it was built into a heavy truck behind bags of dirt and accessible only through a trapdoor. On a clear night with all their gadgetry, the agents seem to have the upper hand.

Immigrant smugglers have reportedly doubled their prices to around \$700 (£450) for a

guide and transport, and are forced on to longer, tougher trails through mountains to the east that rise to 4,500 feet.

One night last week 2,100 people were caught here, amid a seasonal New Year's push to the California farm fields. Last year 540,000 were apprehended. But the agents know that most - after their fingerprints and faces are efficiently captured on computer scanners - will simply keep trying. When caught, they usually give up without a struggle.

"You've got to treat it like the aliens treat it, like it's a big

game," said one. "Because if you are frustrated you are going to make mistakes."

Hanging over the wall with a group of about 20 people, Luz Maria, 27, teases the men on the American side who are likely to be running her down in a few hours. "Are you going to give us a lift?" she calls. She's safer with the border patrol than the Mexican police, she said. Luz Maria went back to Mexico to see her 10-year-old son after seven years in a Los Angeles sweatshop. "It's for the gringos benefit," she said. "I worked 12 and a half hours, no overtime."

"We've got to treat it like it's a big

IN BRIEF

Chechens to free raid hostages

Grozny — Chechen rebels pledged to free on Tuesday all hostages seized in a raid in to southern Russia except several police whom they hope to exchange for captured rebels. The hostages are released in the eastern Chechen town of Novogrozensky.

The rebels smuggled the hostages to Chechnya last week when they escaped a four-day assault on Pervomayskoye village by Russian forces. The assault finally crushed the rebels' resistance last Thursday. In Turkey, the Black Sea ferry with around 200 freed hostages seized last week by pro-Chechen gunmen left for its original destination, the Russian port of Sochi. *Reuters*

Corsica bomb blast

Ajaccio — A bomb caused minor damage to a shop owned by a local official in the Corsican capital. It was the second blast on the island since a three-month truce was declared by separatist militants nine days ago in their guerrilla campaign in pursuit of greater autonomy from France. *Reuters*

Ferry wreck found

Jakarta — Searchers found the wreckage of a ferry that sank in a storm, killing at least 54 people and leaving more than 100 unaccounted for. The ferry was found about six miles from its destination, Sabang, on the island of Web. The 47 survivors accounted for include two Britons, identified as Steven Nicholson and his wife, Caroline. *AP*

Potomac floods

Washington — The snow-swollen Potomac River burst its banks, causing what the authorities expect to be Washington's area's worst floods in a decade. In Pennsylvania, the Susquehanna River swamped the state capital, Harrisburg, knocking out a bridge and flooding the governor's mansion. *Reuters*

Minister quits

Vilnius — Lithuania's Interior Minister, Romas Vaitekunas, resigned. Lithuanian radio reported. He had come under fire for allegedly withdrawing \$2,000 (£1,290) from Innovation Bank two days before the central bank moved to close it on suspicion of fraud. *Reuters*

Aid workers killed

Sarajevo — Up to six people died when a vehicle carrying workers for a German aid organisation skidded off the road and into the Neretva River, near Jablanica, about 25 miles northeast of Mostar in southern Bosnia. *AP*

Aristide marries

Port-au-Prince — President Jean-Bertrand Aristide of Haiti, a former Roman Catholic priest, and Mildred Trouillot, a US-born lawyer, were married on Saturday in a simple ceremony in the garden of his private residence. *Reuters*

'We want work ... we want to support our families'

PHIL DAVISON
Ciudad Juarez

Clutching an embroidered white bundle that enclosed her 16-month old son, Esperanza Delgado walked casually across the US-Mexican border at nightfall with her husband Carlos and father Manuel. They had waited in the shadows of a railway track until a US border patrolman drove off.

He might have turned a blind eye but they couldn't be sure. They were going north-to-south, back to Mexico but they were illegal immigrants and were, from the US point of view, returning illegally, too. They were crossing at an unmarked area, not at one of the dozen of

federal frontier posts between El Paso, Texas and its Mexican Siamese twin, Ciudad Juarez.

The Delgado family were returning from a typical eight-day stint on the US side as vegetable pickers and cleaners in Sunland Park, a town that forms the south-eastern border of the state of New Mexico but is essentially a western suburb of El Paso. They had lived secretly with relatives and worked for a boss only too happy to hire hard workers for one-third the cost of American labourers.

Like many Mexicans, the Delgados were angry about increased US security on the border, notably a 10-foot fence being started along the sandy plain that separates Sand

Park from the Anapra shanty town outside Ciudad Juarez.

As the Delgados picked their way from the Union Pacific railway track on the US side through dunes and rocks to the shanty houses of Anapra, they passed a sign in red letters, in Spanish and English, by Anapra residents. "The inhabitants of Anapra protest against this new Berlin Wall," it read. "I had a dream I saw people holding hands together with no iron walls but bridges of freedom."

The Mexican media have taken to calling the security-tightened border the "Frontera Curtain". Media and Mexican politicians alike, including the government of President Ernesto Zedillo, say the US will declare a kind of war

"militarisation" of the border could threaten good-neighbourly relations.

The Americans say they are building the 'fence' because Mexican bandits have been hijacking cars and robbing American goods trains at a point where the track runs only six feet from the unmarked border.

"All the militarisation, the new fences won't work," said Enrique Lomas, an academic who runs the Ciudad Juarez Centre of Information and Migration Studies.

"It would need a US declaration of war against Mexico, putting troops along the entire 2,000-mile border, to stop immigration. Maybe the Republicans will declare a kind of war,

on immigration, if they win in November.

"If the human rights of Mexicans are regularly violated at the border by American police, what's it going to be like with the military there? The military's priority is to liquidate the enemy; they are trained to kill. We're very worried," Mr Lomas said.

Ironically, it was the drawing of the border which created the problems in this area, where two-thirds of El Pasenos are of Mexican origin, almost everyone on each side has relatives on the other and there are 50 million legal crossings a year.

El Paso and Ciudad Juarez

were one city and one community, divided along the path of

the Rio Grande — often only waist deep and 30 feet wide — by the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican-American war. Under the treaty, the US took half of Mexico, including Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and southern California, and declared the Rio Grande the border from here to the Gulf. Through the mere fact of having a river run through it, the single city became split between two countries, in some ways two worlds. In the Mexican psyche, impressed on them at school or handed down through tales or songs, when they cross into the US, they are still on their own territory.

"There are historic, cultural and family reasons which oblige Mexicans to go to the US," Mr Lomas said. "Mexicans who work in the US send back \$3bn (£1.9bn) a year to their families. The economics of some southern Mexican villages rely entirely on that money."

As 25-year-old Esperanza Delgado trudged off to her cardboard and corrugated-iron hut in Anapra, without water or electricity stolen from distant pylons, she said she was as angry with her own government as with Bill Clinton and his new fence. "Tell Zedillo to give us water and work. We go to the US because we have to. We want to work; we're not lazy. We just want to support our families."

Alexander's Ragtime Band plays out of tune

RUPERT CORNWELL
North Conway, New Hampshire

An unusual name won't win your party's nomination for President, but it should help. For one thing, you can print placards with the oddly catchy first name, Lamar. You can also take the campaign trail with an ensemble called Alexander's Ragtime Band in which — if you're as accomplished a pianist as this particular candidate — you can actually play.

But there is more to the man than a name and a talent for music. He is engaging, energetic and competent, admired even among his foes for his two terms as governor of Tennessee

and then as Education Secretary in the Bush administration. He has a good organisation, a decent message and a fair amount of money.

He's even walked across the state, clad in his trade-mark red and black plaid shirt to proclaim his affinity with the common man. Thus to the most baffling question of the 1996 campaign, four weeks before the crucial New Hampshire primary. Why is Lamar Alexander doing so badly?

The annual Lincoln Day dinner of the Republican Committee of Carroll County here is the stuff of traditional New Hampshire retail politics, a cattle market of candidates court-

ing votes in what claims to be the most Republican county in the US, where no Democrat has been elected to local office in decades.

No matter that Conway is up north, in the mountains of moose country, and that the weather on Friday evening was straight out of Bram Stoker. These are events a campaigner misses at his peril, and Mr Alexander was there, working the room, shaking a hundred hands, explaining why he was the only Republican candidate who could beat Bill Clinton.

His case is plausible enough. He is conservative but not frighteningly so, sound on taxes and the balanced budget, with a Kennedyesque message of "expecting less of Washington and more of ourselves". Above all he is young and fresh, politely pressing his case that Bob Dole, his case is plausible enough.

It was more exciting here a year ago, just after the 1994 election, when everyone thought Bill Clinton was finished," said Gerald Coogan, a North Conway real-estate consultant and Republican activist, surveying the savage TV ad war of which the campaign seems primarily to consist. "Now things are stuck. Dole's not generating real enthusiasm. They're just beating each other up, and Clinton is going to get re-elected."

This was not what Mr Alexander planned. Logically he should have been a prime beneficiary of the withdrawal from the race of Governor Pete Wilson of California, and of General Colin Powell's decision not to run. Instead, he is stuck in the 4 to 6 per cent range nationally — barely more than an opinion poll's "statistical margin of error". In New Hampshire, he is doing a percentage point or two better, but far behind Mr Dole and Mr Forbes, a solid second in every key primary state.

A candidate should have "a certain incandescence", Mr Alexander wrote in his 1983 book, *Six Months Off*. Eight years on, he is barely smouldering.

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Alexander: Lagging badly in the presidential stakes

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Elections in Palestine: A people so long mired in conflict give the peace accord with Israel an overwhelming vote of approval

Jubilant Arafat wins legitimacy

PATRICK COCKBURN
Jerusalem

The victory of Yasser Arafat and his Fatah movement in the first Palestinian election for president and a legislative council shows that Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza support the peace accords agreed with Israel. The election and the high turnout also give legitimacy to the Palestinian leadership and to Palestinian self-determination, for which they have fought for so long.

Mr Arafat won 84 per cent of the vote, though his opponent, Samiha Khalil, a social worker, was little known. Fatah is likely to dominate the 88-member Palestinian Council, but many well-known independents, like Hanan Ashrawi, also were elected. In Gaza, which Mr Arafat has ruled since 1994, officials estimated that the turnout was 90 per cent.

The decision of a large majority of Palestinians to vote is a blow to the secular and Islamic opposition, which had called for a boycott of the poll. Only in Hebron, south of Jerusalem, was there a poor turn-out, because Israeli troops are still in the city to protect settlers, who marched and demonstrated on election day.

The turn-out in east Jerusalem was only about 30 per cent, but this is explained by lines of Israeli soldiers and police ringing the five post offices where Palestinians were meant to vote. Outside the largely empty post office in Salahuddin Street on Saturday morning, two policemen were telling voters that there were "too many people inside" and to return later.

Jimmy Carter, the former US president, who was leading a team of election monitors, objected to the arrest of Palestinian observers and the use of video cameras by police to identify voters.

"I don't think there is any doubt that they are trying to intimidate," Mr Carter said.

Israel appears to have tried to deter Palestinians from casting their vote in order to say that they approved of Israeli rule in

Jerusalem. This tactic may prove counter-productive and make the future of Jerusalem an international issue before its final status comes up for negotiation in May.

If the atmosphere in and around Hebron was menacing, the feeling in villages like Jifna, in the centre of the West Bank, was closer to that



Vox populi: A woman in Gaza City prepares to vote

of a village fete. The polling station was in rooms belonging to a local Christian women's society. Inside, villagers cast red ballots for the president and white ballots for the council. As darkness fell, a local man said: "We think about 70 per cent have voted in this district."

In the twisting, muddy lanes of the Jalazoun refugee camp two miles from Jifna, the issue of the election was more contentious. "My family are refugees from 1948 and I don't think these elections can do anything for us," said Qassem Najaib, 27, a student. "They won't give us the ability to return to our land. Everyone remembers us during the election campaign. But then they will take

their seats in the Council and do nothing for us."

Outside the polling station in a YMCA centre, Ziad Hamdan, an engineer, was handing out cards urging people to vote for Abed Jawad Saleh, a former mayor of el-Bireh who had been deported by Israel. He stressed that Mr Saleh had tried to improve the dreadful roads in the refugee camp and to do something for the labourers who populate it. When votes were counted, local people like Mr Saleh, who has no money and scarcely campaigned, were doing better than expected against Fatah leaders from abroad.

A reason for the high turnout may be that more women than expected voted. In Jalazoun an official said that "two-thirds of voters came by 4pm — more women than men, because women are more concerned about these things". This participation by women may also reflect the waning influence of Hamas, which has discouraged women from becoming openly involved in politics since the mid-1990s.

About 68 per cent of people in the West Bank live in villages, but few work in agriculture. Most have been labourers in Israel and are badly affected by the periodic closure of the Israeli border since 1993. The economic future of the West Bank, therefore, will remain dependent on Israeli decisions and not on those of the newly elected President and Council.

The withdrawal of Israeli troops from West Bank towns last month and the elections are seen by Palestinian officials as ending the threat that Israel would annex the West Bank as part of the Land of Israel.

A rally by about 10,000 settlers and right-wingers in Zion Square in west Jerusalem on Saturday night primarily emphasised the threat to Jerusalem.

The main slogan above the platform read: "All hands to the defence of Jerusalem". The theme seemed implicitly to accept that the battle for greater Israel was over.



Local hero: The test of Yasser Arafat's popularity has been his ability to lead the Palestinians for a quarter of a century despite great disasters. Photograph: Reuter

Survivor who lived to lead his nation

PATRICK COCKBURN
Jerusalem

Palestinian public opinion would accept.

He was always aided by the tendecy of his opponents to under-estimate him. Mr Brezinski was not alone in this. Others who have tried and failed to eliminate him politically, and probably personally, include some of the hardest men in the Middle East, such as General Ariel Sharon of Israel and President Hafez al-Assad of Syria.

They under-estimated him because he has few of the personal attributes of a national leader. He is a dreadful public speaker; in interviews he often appears shiftless and insincere; he has much-criticised fondness for appointing courtiers to important positions. At the same time he has never been a blood-thirsty man, though he has lived in a bloodthirsty world.

Even when feuding with the leaders of other organisations in the Palestine Liberation Organisation, he seldom cut them off from funds.

Mr Arafat's support for Iraq in 1990 did not wholly fail. The Gulf war increased the power of the US in the region. President George Bush pushed Israel into talks with the Palestinians. A row between the US and the right-wing government in Jerusalem helped Labour win the election in 1992. A year later the Oslo accords were agreed, giving Palestinians autonomy and something close to a state, though hedged with restrictions on its authority.

Opponents of Oslo said it was a sell-out on refugees from 1948, Palestinian prisoners, Israeli settlements, Jerusalem and borders. Mr Arafat would have none of it. He was desperate to establish facts on the map of what had once been Palestine, even if he was accused of being a Palestinian Buthelezi, ruling isolated cantons.

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essay

Peter Singer, inspiration of the animal liberation movement, talks about a humane, non-religious ethic to Andrew Marr

Just a step away from animal rights

Q: Professor Singer, in your new book you talk about an ethical revolution and the collapse of our traditional ethical order. What do you mean by that?

A: The traditional ethic has seen human beings as the centre of the moral universe and, indeed, the only thing that really matters. We are now at the stage of a kind of Copernican revolution in ethics: we are dethroning human beings from the centre of the moral sphere, and we are including the other sentient beings with whom we share this planet for the first time as morally significant beings.

Q: Why is this happening? Is it because of the death of religion, which traditionally put man somewhere between the angels and the animals, or is it because we understand more about the need to get on with other creatures in the biosphere?

A: I think it is both. The fact that we are able to think ethically, independently of religion, is a tremendously important thing that has come into its own only in this century. Environmental issues have certainly given us more awareness of the way we are interlinked with other beings. And, on top of that, I would say that the full implications of the Darwinian revolution in thought are coming home to us: the great gulf that for so many centuries has separated humans from other animals, we can now see not as a gulf but a continuum, a matter of small steps between us and other species.

Q: Well, it is small steps, but common sense suggests there is also a very large gap between our ability to make ethical choices, our impact on the world, and theirs. There is still a sharp dividing line, Darwin notwithstanding, between us and even the great apes.

A: There are significant differences. But the most important principles of ethics apply to all human beings, and when you look at human infants, or humans with severe intellectual disabilities, then there is not that gap any more between humans and non-human animals – in fact, there is quite an overlap between some of them.

Q: Isn't that because in the case of the human infant we are respecting their potential to become a fully sentient being, and in the case of humans with extreme disabilities we are, as it were, honouring their past and their possibility of being human?

A: As far as infants are concerned, yes, it is reasonable to talk about their potential. But when we look at those with permanent severe disabilities and those who have never had the capacities for the sort of consciousness we are talking about, I think what we really respect and acknowledge in them is their



On the march: Singer's ideas have inspired many to demonstrate on behalf of animal liberation groups

sentience, their capacity still to feel something, for their lives to go well or badly in some meaningful sense. And we should be aware that the same is true of many non-human animals. They are sentient, they can suffer, their lives can go well or badly from their own internal point of view. There is a sub-

jective awareness.

Q: Are you saying, in a sense, that we have to extend our concept of pity to other species? And, if so, how far down the species chain do you go?

A: I can understand it very well with a dog or a chimpanzee; I cannot understand it so clearly with a snail or a haddock.

A: I would look at it slightly differently. I would say we look at the idea of human equality, which has been a very important idea in the 20th century, and we ask what that is based on. It is not based on having a certain level of intelligence or self-awareness, but on a principle of equal consideration of people's interests. We ought to extend that principle of equal consideration of interests to non-human beings.

Q: But if I extend the idea of equality to a member of another race, I am extending it to somebody who can think, reason, talk, exactly like I can or in a very similar way. Once I try to jump the species barrier,

surely it is an entirely different thing?

A: Well, I don't think that all animals are equal to humans in every respect. But where they can suffer, I think their suffering ought to have equal weight with similar sufferings of human beings.

Q: So if a deer suffers in a trap, it

is similar – yes, it does matter just as much.

Q: If there were two traps, one with the human, one with the deer, there would be no question in your mind that it was more morally correct to go first to rescue the human than to rescue the deer?

A: If it is merely a matter of going

carnivorous life in the raw, and the fact that all biological life involves suffering and pain, why is it that the human has a particular responsibility to alleviate and reduce suffering on the planet?

A: Human beings have that responsibility because we are self-aware, capable of moral choice. We do not regard toddlers as morally responsible because they cannot reflect and make that choice. Non-human animals generally also cannot reflect and make that choice, although perhaps dogs or chimpanzees can have some sort of moral responsibility, and we may be able to hold them morally responsible to a degree. But they are more like toddlers. So the real burden of responsibility can only lie where we have the capacity to reflect and choose.

Q: Isn't that an enormous leap?

A: In the 18th or 19th century, Europeans viewed other races as almost like another species.

You can find examples of writers who listed the Hottentots for example, South Africans, as being of another species, and you can find others who wanted to include the chimpanzee or the orang-utan within our species.

Q: One of the notorious ways of expressing that late 19th-century racist view of other groups was "the white man's burden", that other races were able to suffer but did not have the same moral and political responsibility to act as the white race. Are you, in a sense, saying that

this is *Homo sapiens'* burden in the same way?

A: I think we do have a burden, yes, because we are the species that dominates the planet, in the simple sense of having the power to affect all other beings much more than they have the power to affect us.

Q: Are there circumstances in which you would sacrifice a human life for non-human animal lives?

A: You have to look at the levels and capacities of that life. Take, for example, a human being with no capacity for consciousness – a baby born with severe brain damage or something of that sort – and a chimpanzee with a high capacity for consciousness and self-awareness.

If in some way you could save the life of the chimpanzee by taking the life of the baby, perhaps by doing an organ transplant or something, I would think that was justifiable, because I think the chimpanzee is a more aware being, a more sensitive being, and therefore a more morally significant being.

Q: What would you say to the animal liberationists of an extreme kind who, from time to time, appear to regard human life as less than the lives of animals suffering in laboratories and so on? Because once you remove the specialness of human life, you can open the door to all sorts of extremism ...

A: Well, there are extremists and fundamentalists in Christianity, in Islam, and in other religions, and sadly there are one or two in the animal movement as well. I think they have been extremely few in number, given the millions of supporters the animal liberation movement has had. Those whom you could describe as putting animal life ahead of human life – I have to say I have never met one. I have nothing in common with that kind of fundamentalist approach.

Q: And do you think in the end it is going to be possible to construct a humane, viable ethic, without any religion at all, without any kind of traditionalist, generationally learnt, underpinning? Can we break our way through to this new Copernican revolution without pain and bloodshed?

I certainly believe we can. There is already a substantial movement towards that ethic in many developed societies – the religious veneer, if you like, is starting to disappear, and we have already taken major steps towards that non-religious, humane, compassionate ethic. All that is necessary now is for us to stand up and see that we have taken those steps, and put the finishing touches to the details of what that ethic is going to be like.

Peter Singer is Andrew Marr's guest on 'The Big Idea' at 11.15pm on BBC 2 on Wednesday

DIARY

History men hone insults

Sarah Bradford, the viscountess whose biography of the Queen earned its noble author an unaccustomed flurry of flak last week, is to face her critics in public. I can reveal. She has been persuaded to take part in a debate at the Royal Society of Literature on 22 February with her fellow royal historians Hugo Vickers and Philip Ziegler. The topic is 'Royalty and restraint: should royal biographers observe a special set of rules?'

It should make for an evening of polished insults. The viscountess's book – which

claims that Prince Philip had two close extramarital relationships and that a former lady-in-waiting killed herself because she was sacked – has reportedly lost her the esteem of her peers.

Vickers, for one, is puzzled by what he describes as the "surprisingly gossipy" extracts in a broadsheet paper. "I myself," he says, "believe you have to play by special rules, because otherwise you just can't get the access."

The evening should clarify whether or not Sarah Bradford used the royal archives for her research. "It seems that she has gained a lot of material close to the palace, so one assumes she got a certain amount of access to the archives," says Vickers. "And yet, if you do that, you have to sign a document stating that the Queen can see, and amend, the book prior to publication."

Potential gatecrashers from the media should heed Vickers's warning: "The RSL is a distinguished, learned group. The last thing we want is Sky TV cameras."



Little Richard: the bopping stops when the sabbath starts

Times change

Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells may think twice in future before reaching for his pen. He may find he receives some unwanted communication by return of post. One letter writer to the Times last week received junk mail from two organisations.

One, from a travel agent, began: "It was a pleasure to read your recent letter to the Editor of the Times and I hope that you will find the information contained in this letter useful..."

Annie's angst

There was one scene from Friday's Commons launch of a new political TV soap opera that I would have no hesitation

in putting into the script right away. The Tory MP Michael Brown, adviser on Annie's Bar, was busily telling journalists about the true identities of certain characters in the series. This brought a scowl to the face of one onlooker, Derek Draper, formerly known as the spin doctor's spin doctor (he used to advise Peter Mandelson). "He's giving too much away," muttered an agitated Draper, under his breath.

Brown was oblivious. "And here's another hint," he continued. "If you were to think that one of the characters was Peter Mandelson you wouldn't be far wrong."

At this, the old "master-project" button went off in Draper's brain. He marched up to Brown, put an arm round him and swept him away.

Out of puff

Some employers ban smoking and tell the addicts to like it or lump it. Some allow them a room to gather and blow smoke at each other. Only a publisher would give them their own personal analysts. The bosses at Macmillan are offering their 600 staff either nicotine patches or hypnotherapy sessions to smooth the transition to a nicotine-free zone. Authors wondering why it takes so long for their manuscripts to be returned now know. The editors are all in therapy.

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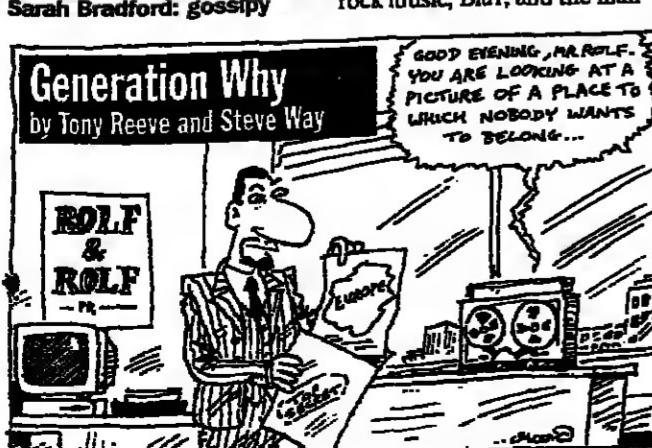
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Sarah Bradford: gossip



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Time to prop up Europe

Recession is haunting Europe. The situation in Germany and France may not be catastrophic, but it is very serious. Growth is slowing, consumer confidence is falling and unemployment rising. However, the most important consequences of this downturn will not be economic; they will be political. Recession and retrenchment will test the political stability of both Germany and France as well as casting a long shadow over the European Union's plans for further integration.

The signs of contraction are unmistakable. The German economy stagnated in the third quarter of 1995 and activity is expected to fall in the final three months of the year. A big jump in unemployment, to almost 10 per cent, in December has rung alarm bells across the country.

In France, where the unemployment rate is 11.5 per cent, the outlook for 1996 is even bleaker. According to a leaked report from the labour ministry, growth could be little more than 1 per cent. Consumer confidence is at its lowest for almost 10 years.

Across Europe economic conditions have deteriorated much more and much faster than expected. One principal reason is that public spending is being cut back by governments attempting to meet the Maastricht treaty criteria for inclusion within the economic and monetary union. The race to meet the EMU 1999 deadline has led to tax hikes and spending cuts, which are taking spending power out of the European economy.

In Germany, another powerful factor is at work. The slowdown there may be in part structural; the product of the high price of unification, the highest labour costs in the world and an overvalued currency. Unemployment is rising because companies have responded to lower growth and weaker export markets by making workers redundant. Small and medium-sized companies are not recruiting. German industry is still far stronger than its British counterpart, but it is going through a bout of restructuring not unlike that enforced by Margaret Thatcher in the early Eighties, when sterling was strong and public spending was cut back.

The response to this slowdown is equally obvious. In the short term a halt has to be called to further efforts at fiscal retrenchment since they would simply deepen the downturn. At the same time, the Bundesbank should loosen interest rates. More important are structural reforms, particularly to Germany's highly regulated labour market, which would help speed its adjustment to slower growth.

The costs of inaction could be high. Already the fragility of France's political system has been exposed by the strains provoked by reining in public spending. The strikes last year were not simply in response to cuts in welfare spending, they amounted to an attack on the French elite.

The German political system is more robust. It is unlikely that change there will be accompanied by the kind of conflict we have seen in France. But there are darker clouds on the horizon. Continental Europe is probably embarking on a period of growth far lower than it has been used to. The frustration that will breed will cast a pall not just over EMU but also over the wider cause of European integration. That is why governments should take this slowdown seriously and nip it in the bud.

Harman gets her priorities right

Harriet Harman's son, Joe, is not a politician. He has not spent years debating composite motions at the Labour Party conference about comprehensives and opted-out schools. Nor has he stood for Parliament advocating particular educational policies. If Labour wins the general election, Joe will not be in the running for a cabinet post. He is simply an 11-year-old boy, who like any child, needs the best schooling available.

And this is exactly what Ms Harman and her husband, Jack Dromey, a senior Transport and General Workers' Union official, are trying to provide. They have decided to send him to St Olave's School in Bromley, Kent, after he beat 600 other children in an examination to gain one of just 90 places in the grammar school. It is a fine school, state-funded, where the teachers are committed and the results are good. Most pupils go on to university.

Any parent would be proud that a son had a chance to thrive in this school's excellent academic environment and to enjoy its generous tree-lined rugby fields. They would be right to reflect on the fact that such facilities within the state sector are available only to the lucky few. But no parent, not even Harriet Harman, can be held responsible for the uneven nature of Britain's state education system.

Yet neither the political opportunists in the Conservative Party nor the puritanical ideologues of the Labour Party have been able to keep their lips hushed.

Tory critics say the decision exposes Ms Harman as a hypocrite and makes a

nonsense of Labour's opposition to selection in state schools. Combined with the Blair's decision to send their son to a grant-maintained school, this latest controversy is being seized upon as vindication of the Government's education policies. Meanwhile, Clare Short, Ms Harman's fellow frontbencher, yesterday made a thinly veiled attack on her colleague, who would have to "answer to her constituents" for what she had done. Ms Short is unlikely to be the only Labour politician to make known her distaste for Joe being allowed to attend St Olave's.

All this is politics taken too far. Whatever the rights and wrongs of this country's education policies, the debate should be confined to public life. The children of politicians do not choose their parents and should not have to suffer for their beliefs. It is also hypocritical to expect a parent, even a politician with strong views, to do anything but the best for her children. The real crime would have been if Ms Harman had stunted her son's potential achievement and made his progress come second to her own political ambitions.

Indeed, it is reassuring to see Ms Harman prepared to take the flak for her choice rather than pretending to be an ideological saint. As Labour makes its claim to govern, most people would prefer politicians whose actions reflect what they themselves would do in the circumstances. Voters are certainly likely to be more comfortable with a politician who gets her priorities right and puts the interests of her children first.

Melvyn's rules for the conversation game



MILES KINGTON

Every Monday morning on Radio 4 there is a programme called *The Conversation Game*.

Well, it is not actually called *The Conversation Game*. It is called *Start The Week*. But it might as well be called *The Conversation Game*, because it is one of the few radio programmes left in which you can hear conversation being played according to the traditional rules of the game.

What happens is that Melvyn Bragg gathers together in his studio a random selection of one scientist, one author, one person involved in a big TV production and a token person who is always a woman, and he plays the game of conversation with them. This is not such a tightly ruled game as *Just a Minute*, and in fact the rules of the game called conversation are so loose and so unwritten that not many people realise it is a game at all, but game it is, and if you should want to play it at home, it helps if you know some of the rules.

For instance, you have to know that you do not need to stick to grammatical rules. You often hear quite literate people saying hideously ungrammatical things such as: "He is the kind of person who, if he

had lived in the 19th century, people would not have been able to categorise him." In conversation it does not always matter if things are plural or singular, which is why people with a good education can be heard to say: "These are the kind of thing which ... instead of the correct 'kinds of thing which ...'. We now accept things like this in conversation."

But the rule of conversation which I would like to draw attention to this morning is the rule which says: "In any given situation, you can use one fashionable adjective to show that you approve of a thing, and another one to show that you disapprove of exactly the same thing."

Let me give you an example. If, as sometimes happens, one of Mr Bragg's guests says that television is a cold medium compared to radio or



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Car ownership, not class, is the great divider

From Mr John Stewart

Sir: It is a pity that Hamish McRae in his comprehensive look at the car ("Driving a social revolution", 17 January) seems to have fallen into the trap of believing that safer cars mean safer roads. In fact, over the past decades our roads have become more dangerous. The main reason for the fall in fatalities is the marked decline in pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists using the roads.

In 1971, 80 per cent of seven- and eight-year-olds went to school on their own (mostly on foot or by bicycle); by 1991 it was 9 per cent. The main reason parents gave for accompanying their children to school was fear of traffic.

Further research shows that safer cars tend to increase the danger on the roads as drivers, feeling less exposed, take greater risks. Real road safety can only be achieved by reducing the danger at source. That requires taming the traffic through reduced speed limits, rigorously enforced; by the eventual installation of onboard speed limiters in all cars (which will ensure that the vehicle cannot break the speed limit); and through a fundamental reallocation of road space to other road users.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN STEWART
Vice-Chair
RoadPeace
London, SW2

18 January

From Mr Antony Alexander

Sir: Hamish McRae describes the car as

a machine of democracy, breaking down differentiation by class and replacing it with differentiation by wealth. Everyone is equal in a traffic jam, but each can proclaim their wealth and status by the car in which they sit.

Mr McRae presumably means "everyone who is anyone", because "everyone" includes the many non-drivers whose lives have been made significantly worse by the in moderate level of car ownership; whether through pollution, noise and visual degradation, the slowing of buses, the decimation of the rail network, danger to children, increased opportunities for criminals, and the cost of various hidden motorway subsidies, including for health care and road space in town centres.

Far from breaking down class divisions, the "Great Car Society"

has imposed a kind of caste system in which car drivers obtain the benefits and everyone else suffers. More democracy is surely found on public transport: at least the different classes are travelling on the same train.

Yours sincerely,
ANTONY ALEXANDER
Douglas
Isle of Man
19 January

From Mr David Seymour

Sir: Just imagine the oceans and airways jammed tight with solo navigators in the way our roads are. If motorists had to pay the full cost of their "freedom", including that of damage to health and the environment, they would be taxed out of existence.

I realise that as a white, middle-aged man I am almost an extinct species on the buses, but the crowded public transport I experience regularly shows me all too clearly that car ownership is by no means as universal as many claim. And many users of public transport choose to be so. I certainly would not have it otherwise.

Yours sincerely,
DAVID L. SEYMOUR
London, SE4
18 January

A clear view of St Paul's

From Mr C. M. Bouck-Standen

Sir: The recent correspondence regarding the proposed redevelopment of Paternoster Square reminds me of the comments of my late mother, who worked at a bookshop in Paternoster Row in the Thirties.

She described the shop as a rat-infested hell-hole which was frequented by clergymen who came to the shop for a free read. She considered that the Germans had done us all a favour by reducing the shops to rubble.

Her point was, of course, that a picturesque and pleasing exterior sometimes hides an internal sun. My personal view is that nothing that is built there can complement the cathedral – certainly not another array of classical buildings. The area should be cleared and a park created with pedestrian access only, allowing a full view of St Paul's triumph.

Yours faithfully,
C. M. BOUCK-STANDEN
Lingfield,
Surrey
17 January

'Cleansing' in West Papua

From The Rev Dr C. Garland and Mrs N. Garland

Sir: Your report on industrial relations in the Post Office ("The last post", 17 January) was, in parts, amusing (I was described as a militant when I led the union campaign against privatisation, a moderate in your sister paper last Sunday and a right-winger in Wednesday's article), but it did highlight the tensions caused in a business where the workforce has not seen the success of the business reflected in their terms and conditions (86 per cent of delivery staff still work the same compulsory six-day week that was introduced in 1847).

I

can assure your readers that no one in the Communication Workers Union is seeking a national dispute. Our objective is to provide the high-quality delivery service that the public expects, with a professional and mainly full-time workforce on manageable deliveries that do not require breaches to health and safety standards or subject a harsh and repressive disciplinary regime.

We are determined to achieve these objectives through discussion and negotiation. If that determination is shared by the employer, there is no reason why we should not succeed.

Yours sincerely,

C. GARLAND
N. GARLAND
Messing, Essex
17 January

Hell is in Norway

From Mr John Challenor

Sir: I too have a copy of Delia Smith's *Frugal Food* (letter, 19 January). Sadly, the price of such items as whiting, shoulder of lamb and even streaky bacon make them a rare treat for those on a tight budget. Others, such as mutton, are things of blessed memory only. And as for ox-tail – think BSE. I also suspect that Ms Smith might be just a soupçon embarrassed by some of the recipes: pizza with cream cheese, for example. Still, who would not be embarrassed by youthful follies?

Yours faithfully,

JANE LAWSON
London, SE7
17 January

Youthful follies

From Ms Jane Lawson

Sir:

Ms Smith's *Frugal Food* (letter, 19 January) suggests that the recipe calls for two eggs and the shop sells them in packets of six, then chuck all of them in! God knows what it will taste like when she has thrown in the whole jar of nutmegs.

Yours sincerely,

JACK MOORE
Newcastle upon Tyne
18 January

Conservatively old

From Mr N. Collins

Sir: Is the apparent demise of the Young Conservatives, described by Jim White ("Is the party over?", 17 January), a reflection of the fortunes of their parent party, or is it that the current generation has recognised something that should have been obvious all along: namely, that the phrase "Young Conservative" is a contradiction in terms?

Yours faithfully,

N. COLLINS
Godalming, Surrey
17 January

Imperial weight-loss

From Mr Nicholas Organ

Sir: While also delighted that metrication renders fog less dense (letter, 18 January), I fear it may also make one fatter. The lifts at my office happily accept 20 people when the loading limit is expressed in pounds, but only 18 when it is given in kilograms. Slimmers might well be advised to stick to imperial units.

Yours faithfully,

NICHOLAS ORGAN
Huddersfield,
West Yorkshire
19 January

literature, meaning that you can provide an imaginative response to radio or books whereas watching TV is a passive, non-participatory, non-creative activity. Mr Bragg can always be relied upon to get very cross and defend TV – the last time I heard him do this, he told the guest that she was talking absolute nonsense, and that anyone who had ever sat round a TV set with other people watching a vital football match, cheering and groaning every inch of the way, would know that television could be highly participatory.

This shut the woman up, because it was quite a telling example. However, if at any time another guest brings forward such an experience or example to back up something with which Mr Bragg disagrees, he will often dismiss it as purely anecdotal.

Do you see the technique at work? If you do it, it is "telling". If someone else does it, it is "anecdotal". Same thing, different adjective.

Another example. I watched England playing a sort of rugby football against France on Saturday, in the hopes of being entertained, and as I slumped lower and lower into my seat, hoping I would stay awake until we got to the Ireland vs Scotland game, I knew it would only be

a matter of time before some commentator would notice that neither side looked like scoring a try and would say something like: "Well, this may not be the most skilful/entertaining game in the world, but no one could deny that it is very exciting." And it duly happened. "Exciting" is the word rugby commentators use to mean that the score is quite close and that the two sides are so evenly matched that they both have a chance of winning. There is another adjective which can be applied to such a match. It is "boring", and it is the word that would be used by everyone in the world who was not English or French, and by many who were.

Here are some more pairs of words. Those on the left are approving, those on the right disapproving.

Romantic	Sentimental
Revolutionist	Simplistic
Erotic	Dirty
Protean	Shapeless
Economic	Cheap
Low-budget	Shoddy
Traditional	Formulaic
High-quality	Elitist
Personal	Incomprehensible

Please send me a list.

Ahead of Paddy Ashdown's key speech tonight, we offer two contrasting views on cross-party co-operation

Should Lib and Lab lie down together?



No, Conrad Russell says: if Tony Blair wants a coalition he'd better show us some real policies

With a bumpy pitch and a blindfold light, spin may appear to be turning much further than it is. Some of the build-up to Paddy Ashdown's speech this evening may lead us to expect more than we are likely to get. Nevertheless, Paddy will ask us to think about the pattern of post-election politics.

Any member of the House of Lords must agree with Paddy's repeated calls for "partnership politics". Cross-party co-operation, of many sorts, should be commoner than it is. I agree with Helmut Kohl that "you should not go into politics if you are not prepared to make coalitions".

There are two indispensable conditions for a coalition. One is that a party entering a coalition must prefer its partner to the alternative. The other is that it must be possible to work out a common programme. In 1992, a large majority of Liberal Democrats thought it possible to satisfy these two conditions with Neil Kinnock. Today, many of us are less sure of these conditions with Tony Blair. The fear exists that, just as Thatcherism is on its deathbed, Mr Blair might give it a new lease of life. If he wants a coalition with the Liberal Democrats, that is the fear he must dispel.

Paddy Ashdown's Glasgow speech in September issued a challenge to the Labour leaders. The invitation to vote against the Tory tax cuts in the Budget (which they ducked), and to commit themselves to bringing Railtrack back into the public sector (which they have not yet answered) were part of the minimum terms for co-operation. Labour must have the courage to offer a real alternative to the Tories.

We cannot tackle the problem by a shopping list: governments daily meet unforeseen issues. If those are to be tackled, coalition partners, like marriage partners, must understand and respect each other's ideology, otherwise they will be perpetually taken by surprise.

Liberals are about the link between consent, law and liberty. The heart of the matter is that no one should have to be bullied by the arbitrary power of another. This is why issues which to Labour seem unconnected, like unfair dismissal, asylum, judicial review and government power to make law without consent by regulation, are to us part of a single threat. Liberalism was never the anti-state creed of the Thatcher parody: we understand that liberty must be protected both from the state.

That means we must reverse the

Thatcherite anti-state ideology so brilliantly satirised by Roy Jenkins in a speech last Thursday. We must be prepared to spend money and raise taxes if necessary. Otherwise the next time we are in a tight financial corner we would have to allow the service concerned to go down the route of care in the community and student finance, because it was not admissible to raise taxes to save it.

Liberal Democrats do not think the victims of care in the community or social security disentitlement are enjoying liberty. Freedom from starvation is a form of liberty and, when all costs are considered, there is no cheaper alternative to the welfare state. We believe, as Paddy said at Glasgow, that "taxes are the subscription to a civilised society". We think the voters have learnt that lesson the hard way.

Many years ago, Paddy was asked which of the legacies of Thatcherism he would reverse first, and he replied, "Centralisation." The Thatcherite programme of forcing us to be free has strengthened the executive even while attacking the state: it has elevated the monarch in Downing Street instead. This must be reversed.

That is why proportionate representation is not just a tactical objective. It is part of a larger ideological programme in which devolution, European law, local government and incorporation of the European Convention of Human Rights are equally important. Tony Blair's elevation of his own office leaves room for doubt as to how far he accepts this ideology. If he wants "strong government", he can count us out.

We need honesty in spelling out policies and what they will cost. Last Thursday, Tony Blair, explaining his stakeholder economy on *Newsnight*, was so vague that he seemed to be taking off Roy Bremner taking off Tony Blair. It reminded me of Sherlock Holmes's maxim that "honest men do not conceal their place of business". If Tony Blair wants a coalition, he must come clean and have some policies. Will Labour join us?

Lord Russell is the Liberal Democrat spokesman in the House of Lords on social security

Why women found Viva such a turn-off

The London radio station run by and for women faces an uphill struggle to survive, argues Mary Braid

Ssix months after its launch as Britain's first radio station made by women for women, Viva 96.3AM is in crisis. The station's owner, Golden Rose Communications Ltd, has confirmed that Viva's operating budget had been cut, reportedly from £350,000 to £150,000, and that three presenters have been made redundant. The show presented by the flamboyant publicist Lynne Franks, Viva's chairperson and one of its founders, is among those axed.

It is just the latest bad news for the London station, launched amid much razzmatazz by Ms Franks and broadcaster Katy Turner, with the backing of a formidable group of media women including Glenda Bailey, outgoing editor of *Marie Claire* magazine, Carmen Callil, founder of Virago Press, and Barbara Follett, prominent Labour Party lumie and wife of the millionaire author Ken. In October it was revealed that Viva had managed to attract just 125,000 listeners, dislodging Greater London Radio from its position at the bottom of the capital's league of listeners.

This weekend, industry insiders were suggesting that Viva must undergo an overhaul or die. So why has the station, billed as the *Marie Claire* of the airwaves, come unstuck

so badly so soon? Viva blames signalling problems in east and central London for most of its current difficulties. Insiders talk of poor management and listeners of weak programming.

But Viva's troubles may rest in something far more fundamental: the rather doubtful premise that a women's station is at all in tune with where women are today in keeping with the general cultural climate of the Nineties.

The original concept of the music and chat station would appear to have been a magazine format aimed at women aged 30 to 50. It was to be relatively upmarket, pitching for the same audience as the highly successful and envied *Marie Claire*. In Britain, women's magazines sell millions. So why should the concept not be transferred to radio?

The most obvious difference is that, unlike *Marie Claire*, Viva faces the near-impossible task of coming up with fresh angles on "women's stories" every day. In sheer volume terms, *Marie Claire*'s content is a drop in the ocean compared to what is needed to keep Viva on the air. And women's magazines stand more chance than a daily radio programme would of successfully repeating (or repackaging) items without detection.

After a relatively promising first week, it was not long before Viva was degenerating into the boring and banal. Some cringe-making moments have already gone down in media folklore – such as presenter Tara Newley opening her first programme by interviewing Joan Collins, her own mother. Women, it could be argued, are attracted to women's magazines

because other publications fail to cater for their interests. It is certainly true that national newspapers – still editorially dominated by men, particularly at senior level – have a largely male feel. The alienation of women is acknowledged in the continued provision of pages specifically for them – despite these being criticised as ghettos, mere tokenism and out-dated Seventies

London is the most competitive radio market in the country and its 18

local stations rely on niche ethnic and musical markets. The question is whether women feel strongly enough that other radio stations discriminate against them, or ignore them, to prompt them into switching to a "woman's station". And, more importantly, whether women form a sufficiently significant homogeneous group to make stations such as Viva a viable proposition. The bad news for Viva may be that radio generally – and certainly the BBC – has taken "feminisation" on board through recruitment and promotions policies and sheer self-awareness.

Viva's uncertain identity was evident at the start in the difference of opinion among its founding females and male executives, about just how male listeners should be considered in the station's programming. The executives' belief that pleasing men was crucial was supported by pre-launch research showing that women tended to turn off the radio if male partners did not like what was on. In this post-feminist era, strident separatists were thin on the ground. Programmes that smacked too much of feminism or were perceived as anti-men were also seen by most women as a turn-off.

If the attitude of Joan Smith, feminist and writer, is shared by many, the station faces an uphill struggle to survive with any semblance of vision intact: "I have never listened to Viva or tried to find it and yet I am a woman who listens to radio all the time and is sympathetic to the notion of women getting a good deal. But despite all the advertising, I just can't get the concept. I don't understand what Viva is offering that I cannot already get on Radio 4. Anyway, I believe it is best to work within existing power structures. You have more chance of challenging things."

There are those like Julia Calo,

sales director of Independent Radio Sales which sells radio advertising who believe that Viva was doomed from the start and that its current problems are insoluble: "I and my sales team feel that a woman's station is not an appropriate or intelligent concept. It is much too narrow and limiting. There are so many different types of women." Women, in short, form no meaningful single entity and cannot be reached or targeted.

If Viva pitched its appeal too crudely, then its salvation will lie in a much more subtle approach, making "people" the target audience but with women kept in the front of the mind, so the overall tone appeals to females while not alienating males. But it is a fine line to tread.

More women are victims of INTESTACY than DIVORCE

A woman, on average, lives longer than a man. So she is more likely to have to face the difficulties of intestacy – the legal term for being left in a mess because her husband didn't make a will.

Many men assume that, on their death, all their own will automatically go to their wives. This isn't so. When a man dies intestate, not just his wife but brothers, sisters and even cousins may have a claim on what he owned.

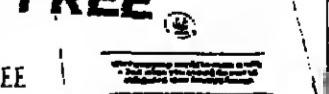
His widow may have to sell the house to pay off his relations. None of this need happen if he makes a will. Yet seven out of ten people fail to take this simple step.

Now, as a service to the public, WWF UK (World Wide Fund For Nature) has produced its own plain language guide to making a will. It explains:

- why everyone needs to make a will
- how to go about it
- and how to minimise tax liability on what you leave behind.

Don't leave it to chance. Give yourself the peace of mind of knowing your loved ones are properly provided for.

Send or phone for our FREE guide to making a Will, today.



Please send me an FREE copy of your guide to Wills and Will-making (allow 28 days for delivery).

Mr Mrs Miss Ms _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Bulldford
(01453) 226445

Postcode _____
Name _____
Address _____
City _____
Postcode _____
Telephone _____
Fax _____
Email _____
Signature _____
Date _____

Send to: Sallie Buttress,
12a Lower Hill, Buntingford,
Bedfordshire, MK42 7JL.
Telephone: 01453 226445
Fax: 01453 226445
Email: sallie.buttress@btconnect.com
Signature _____
Date _____

Hot on the heels of last week's acquittals in the Maxwell case, the Government has announced it intends to review jury trials in fraud cases. Many may consider this to be ill-timed and ill-judged. It is generally agreed that the Serious Fraud Office was right to bring charges. The allegations were simplified and properly presented. Counsel for the prosecution and the defence did their jobs well, and the judge was of the highest calibre. The key questions for the jury in this case, as in so many other fraud trials, were whether there was a criminal agreement and whether the defendants were dishonest. Such issues are pre-eminently for a jury of ordinary citizens to decide.

The fact that the Maxwell jury, properly directed, ignored unprecedented and emotive pre-trial public-

ity and acquitted each of the defendants is a vindication of our trial system. The unfortunate timing of this proposed review suggests an underlying dissatisfaction with the verdict.

Although the principle of jury trial is firmly established under the law, it has long been attacked and eroded on grounds of cost and expediency. Over the past 20 years many offences that entitled a defendant to jury trial – common assault, driving while disqualified – can now be tried only by magistrates. In Northern Ireland, the Diplock Courts, where judges sit without juries, were set up in 1974 as a temporary measure to combat terrorist crime. Yet until

something of an Orwellian flavour about government-appointed panels convicting defendants and sentencing them to substantial terms of imprisonment. If the same panels were to acquit, it could lead to allegations of rigging.

It is right that the trial system should be maintained. It looked at disciplinary proceedings as an alternative to criminal prosecution, with powers to direct financial penalties and compensate those who have suffered loss, and at civil fraud proceedings where the emphasis is on compensation for the victims and punitive damages for dishonesty. None of its recommendations has so far been implemented.

What is important is that the Maxwell trial should not be used to justify the abolition or modification of juries in such cases. If commercial fraud continues to be dealt with as a serious criminal offence, guilt or innocence must be determined by ordinary members of the public.

The writer is chairman of the public affairs committee of the Bar Council

Let juries be the judge on fraud

ANOTHER VIEW

Christopher Sallom

recently they were still used to try a wide range of serious non-terrorist offences.

In 1985 the Roskill Committee recommended removing complex fraud from juries and substituting a fraud trials tribunal consisting of a judge and two lay members specially chosen by the Lord Chancellor for their knowledge of financial matters. "Experts" from the banks and accounting bodies would decide on simple issues such as honesty and dishonesty. There is

obituaries/gazette

Gerry Mulligan

"With Gerry Mulligan you feel as if you're listening to the past, present and future of jazz all at one time," said Dave Brubeck, who had a musical partnership with the baritone saxophonist for four years, from 1968 to 1972.

The unwieldy baritone was never a popular instrument with musicians and the number of great players was small. They included Serge Chaloff, Duke Ellington's Harry Carney and Joe Temperley, Lars Gullin from Sweden and, from Britain, John Surman, John Barnes and Ronnie Ross. Mulligan, who became the most famous of them, was lauded also as a witty and inventive composer and arranger and for the clarity of his simple and yet profound communication with his audiences.

Although he already played saxophones when he first joined Gene Krupa's big band in 1946, it was as the band's staff arranger that he first attracted attention with his composition "Disc Jockey Jump". In 1948 he worked with a nine-piece band put together by a nucleus of jazz composers including Miles Davis, John Lewis, Gil Evans and John Carisi, who together developed the "cool" style of modern jazz playing. When recorded by the popular hit label Capitol in 1949, rather surprisingly for this was intellectual music, the handful of tracks changed the whole future of jazz writing, and are still potent influences today. Mulligan was never recognised for his major role in this group, the credit going wrongly to Miles Davis in New York. Mulligan wrote also for the bands of Elliott Lawrence and the innovators Claude Thornhill and Stan Kenton.

He hitched to Los Angeles in 1951 and worked at the Haig Club with a trio. It seems likely that the piano at the Haig was less than good and Mulligan began working without it. The piano-less jazz group was to be the key feature of his next two decades. As he established himself on the West Coast he recorded there with a "tentet" based on the New York composers' band, and developed the famous piano-less quartet with Chet Baker, a inventive and sensitive trumpet player whose life at that period was like Mulligan's totally governed by heroin addiction. When Mulligan was gaoled for drug offences the young Stan Getz replaced him in the quartet until he came out. By then the music recorded by Mulligan's quartet had become

amongst the best-selling jazz issues of all time and his future was assured.

Baker rightly thought that he could make more money leading his own quartet, and he left, eventually to be replaced by the valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, an inventive composer and player who ranked with Mulligan, and theirs was a uniquely complementary partnership - intellectual as well as musical.

On one occasion Mulligan was being interviewed by an aggressive television-show host. At the rehearsal Mulligan had given the interviewer much information, and had mentioned the fact that he had been in jail for drug offences. In the live show the interviewer said, as though he was confronting the musician for the first time, "I understand that you were involved with drugs, and did some time because of it." Understandably, this left Mulligan in a corner with nothing to answer. The man followed up quickly. Mulligan employed many black musicians throughout his career but at this time, by coincidence, there were none in the quartet. "I notice," said the interviewer, "that there are no black musicians in your group. Is this accidental, or by design?"

Brookmeyer, who was sitting nearby, glared at the interviewer, jerked his thumb at Mel Lewis and said, "We've got a Jewish drummer. Will that help?"

Although he was revered by his fans, by the critics and by most musicians, Mulligan was often arrogant and self-centred. "I think I managed not to be an adult in just about every imaginable area," he said in 1986. "A band is most fun when you're in rehearsals. When you're working you have no time to enjoy it." Mulligan was an impossible taskmaster at band rehearsals. He demanded perfection and would keep his musicians splitting hairs deep into the night. "One night," he spent so many hours trying to polish just a few bars that I very nearly gave up and walked out." Mulligan also liked to play piano in his bands, but typically only as a soloist, being apparently incapable of working in a rhythm section.

Mulligan's extended the "piano-less" theory first to a sextet and then to his hugely successful 13-piece Concert Jazz Band, first formed during the Fifties. Unusually the band used low volume and sensitive dynamics. "Our band shouts but

it doesn't scream. When you overflow the tone quality goes." The group triumphed with fine soloists like Brookmeyer, Zoot Sims and Clark Terry. The Concert band toured the world financed by the impresario Norman Granz, for whose Verve label it recorded. When Granz sold the label in the mid-Sixties the band was left without work.

This was a bad period for Mulligan, for his partner the film star Judy Holliday died of cancer in 1965. The two had composed songs and recorded together, and Holliday had drawn Mulligan into the world of Broadway musicals. However, she didn't like her singing on their records together and the material was not issued until 1980. Mulligan later married another film star, Sandy Dennis.

Mulligan's gaunt face suited the cameras, and he appeared in several films, including *I Want to Live* (1958) and *Bells are Ringing* (1960) with Judy Holliday, also playing and composing the music for innumerable soundtracks. He recorded outstanding small group albums with a succession of top jazz soloists, notably Ben Webster and the altoists Johnny Hodges and Paul Desmond, and in 1972 reformed the big band as the Age of Steam, so called because of the love of steam trains, this time experimenting gently with electronic instruments and rock. This band expired to be succeeded eventually by a new big band in 1978 which won a Grammy in 1980. Mulligan cut back to a quartet with piano in 1986 and continued to discover

er brilliant young players like two of his pianists, Bill Charlap and (his final one) Ted Rosenthal. He reformed the big band for a tour in 1988 when he appeared at the Glasgow Jazz Festival, and he toured and recorded with symphony orchestras playing his own compositions.

Mulligan shared with Duke Ellington the distinction of working as a composer and being able to hear his music immediately played back to him by his band.

Steve Voce

Gerald Joseph Mulligan, saxophonist, bandleader, composer; born New York 6 April 1927; married three times (one son); died Darien, Connecticut 19 January 1996.



Charlton: French at Warwick

He died while on holiday in Tenerife.

William D. Howarth

Donald Geoffrey Charlton, French scholar; born 8 April 1925; Lecturer, Hull University 1949-62; Senior Lecturer 1962-64; Professor, Warwick University 1964-89; married 1952 Thelma Masters (one son, two daughters); died Tenerife 22 December 1995.

The following notes of judgments were prepared by the reporters of the *All England Law Reports*.

Costs
Nigel Daniel (Registrar of Criminal Appeals) for the appellant; John D Taylor (CPS) for the Crown.

A company represented at trial by one of its directors with leave of the court was not a "litigant in person" within Ord 35, r 17 of the County Court Rules so as to enable it to recover its costs against the losing party. *Allen Dyer (Goodwin Derrick) for the company; David Lord (Payne Hicks Beach) for the plaintiff.*

Christopher Bedingfield
Evening Bell will be sung in the Chapel of Gray's Inn, London WC1, on Tuesday 23 January 1996 at 5pm, in memory of Christopher Bedingfield TD QC. Tickets are not required.

Royal Engagements

The Prince Royal opens the new TNT fitness studio at the Duxbury Centre, Aldershot, Wokingham, and at President's Park, Aldershot, on 23 January. *David Davies QC, Secretary General for the British Olympic Association; Sir Peter Hain, Minister of State for Sport, Culture and Media; Sir Michael Edwardes, chairman of the South Sea Bubble speculation fever started, 1720; the Falkland Islands were ceded to Britain by Spain, 1711; this was Bloody Sunday in St Petersburg, when 120,000 citizens marched on the Winter Palace, and were fired upon, 1905; Ramsey MacDonald, the first Labour prime minister, took office, 1924; the first broadcast of a football match took place (Arsenal v Sheffield United) at Highbury, London, 1927; the Empire*

band provided by the Irish Guards.

Changing of the Guard

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment names the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards Parade, London, on 23 January. *Charles Falconer QC, Andrew Moran (Bewin Leighton) for the developers; Roger Ter Haar QC, James Holdsworth (Greenwoods) for the insurers; Jeremy Cooke QC, Dominic Kendrick (Cambridge Markby Hewitt) for the brokers.*

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Correction: In *R v HM Commissioners of Inland Revenue, ex p Dhesi, Case Summaries*, 13 November and 14 August 1995, counsel for the prosecution was Jonathan Fisher.

Professor Donald Charlton

A characteristic feature of the more successful new universities of the early 1960s was the flair shown by their founding fathers in choosing dynamic young scholars for the heads of departments of key departments. There could be few better examples of this than Donald Charlton, who was appointed to the Chair of French at Warwick in 1963, when he was two years short of 40. By the time he retired in 1989, he had become a father-figure to younger colleagues and a wise counsellor in academic matters generally, as well as the long-standing head of what his inspiration and dedication had made into one of the outstanding French departments in the country.

Charlton himself would certainly have wanted it emphasised that his department was a department of "French Stud-

ies"; that is, one with a distinctly wider range than the "language and literature" regime characteristic of most modern language syllabuses.

Reckitt of his departmental colleagues was equally eclectic; and courses on offer to students were to include French cinema, art and music long before such variety became fashionable. The quality of teaching and commitment to students maintained a high level of undergraduate applicants, while graduate research was given a focus it often lacked in arts faculties by the creation (largely due to Charlton) of a European Humanities Research Centre.

An outstanding feature of the Warwick French Department during his headship was the calibre of his colleagues: their record of research and publication remained consistently high. This led inevitably to a constant flow of able colleagues to senior posts elsewhere; but

it was a "brain drain" that could be replaced with younger appointees of similar calibre. Similarly, Warwick graduates were soon well represented in other universities' departments of French so that Donald Charlton was rightly proud of the fact that when a festischrift, *French Literature, Thought and Culture in the Nineteenth Century: a material world*, was presented to him on his retirement - a token of affection for the man, as much as of admiration for the scholar. The contributors comprised in almost equal numbers his Warwick colleagues from various disciplines and his own ex-students.

In retirement, Charlton and his wife settled in Bath; although he took up a part-time visiting professorship at Bristol, this left ample opportunity to enjoy travelling abroad.

Charlton: French at Warwick

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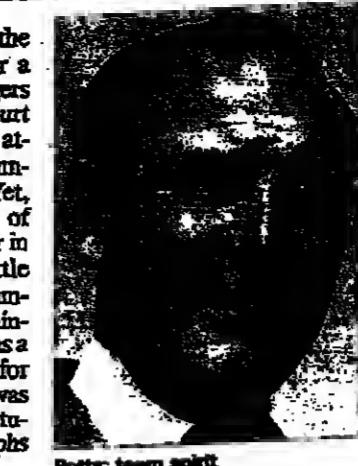
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Harry Potts



Potts: team spirit

Harry Potts never enjoyed the fame of Busby, Shankly or a dozen other football managers of his era, nor did he court Clough-like controversy or attract headlines for matters unrelated to the game. Yet, arguably, the achievement of this gentle North-Easterner in leading unfashionable little Burnley to the League Championship in 1960 and maintaining the Clarets' stature as a leading power in the land for several seasons afterwards was more remarkable than the tumultuous trumpeted triumphs of his renowned peers.

That Potts garnered only limited kudos from the public - although soccer insiders were in no doubt as to his worth - was due partly to his own unassuming personality but also to the fact that Burnley had a fiery figurehead in its chairman, Bob Lord, who was ready to shout the odds on his club's behalf. Their complementary characters melded ideally.

There were two major strands to Potts's success. First, he was an exceptionally shrewd strategist - no one mentioned 4-2-4 in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but that was the system he often employed, enabling a team blessed with few stars to compete with, and frequently outdo, the big city batons. Secondly, his sincerity and genuine concern for the young men in his charge turned Burnley into a family club and fostered a rare team spirit.

He was an enlightened regime, in which he would ask the opinions of players, though he could show steel and take unpopular decisions when he deemed them necessary, such as the 1963 sale of his brilliant but ageing schemer Jimmy McIlroy to Stoke City. Fans condemned him when the deal was mooted - indeed "Potts Out" graffiti survived on walls in the town for at least two decades after the event - but he did not waver.

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After two credible campaigns, Burnley scaled the heights in 1959/60, pipping Wolves for the title. In 1960/61 they reached the quarter finals of the European Cup, going out by a single goal in Hamburg after losing a 3-1 home advantage, they finished fourth in the League and were semi-finalists in both the FA Cup and League Cup.

The following season they could, probably should, have lifted the coveted League/FA Cup double, but squandered a Championship lead to let in Ipswich at the death, and lost in 1962/63 when they came third in the First Division.

Thereafter, sadly, money became increasingly short, the team broke up following the departure of McIlroy, and the rest of the Sixties - save for a third place in 1965/66 - brought mediocrity. Attendances fell, talented youngsters such as Willie Morgan were sold to survive, and in 1970 Potts was shifted "upstairs" to become general manager.

Weary at such a peripheral role, he left in 1972 to become boss of Second Division Blackpool, who missed promotion only narrowly in his first term. However, after two more cash-strapped seasons of respectable mediocrity, he was sacked in May 1976. Soon Potts returned to Burnley (by then in the second flight) as chief scout, and took over as manager again in 1977, only to be dismissed after a poor start to 1979/80. It was a poignant exit for the most successful boss in the club's history.

In the 1980s Potts scouted for the non-league Colne Dynamos, but his activities were restricted increasingly by Parkinson's disease.

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Ivan Ponting

Harold Potts, footballer, manager; born Heaton-le-Hole, County Durham 22 October 1920; played for Burnley 1937-50, Everton 1950-56; coached Wolverhampton Wanderers 1956-57; Manager, Shrewsbury Town 1957-58; Manager, Burnley 1958-70 and 1977-79; Manager, Blackpool 1973-76; married (one daughter); died Burnley 15 January 1996.

Hubert Nicholson



Nicholson: "It was just like that!"

"many of the kinds of life here described are gone, and gone for ever."

The poet Charles Causley said: "As a self-portrait over a certain period of time it seems to me perfect - and most touching, written with real fire: a living book that moves under the fingers - and many many times my memories of pre-1939 led me to cry 'Exactly!', 'Precisely so!'. 'It was just like that!'".

Nicholson's encounters with the famous (Shaw, Becham, the Sitwells, W.H. Auden, Dylan Thomas, Louis Armstrong) and accounts of life in the provinces, Bloomsbury's Bohemia and Soho, took *Half My Days and Nights* to the outbreak of the Second World War, where the book ended.

Born in 1903 in Hull, the son of a master painter, he left school at 16 and started work on a newspaper "copy-rumming" from sub-editors' room to composing room". He became a journalist and the author of 12 novels, half a



GAVYN DAVIES

'Initially, as in the 1950s, some in Britain might delude themselves that we can set ourselves up as the king-pin of the Euro-also-rans, the equivalent of Derby County in the Endsleigh League.'

The costs of staying semi-detached in Europe

The problem of the "ins" and the "outs" may sound like something which only carmen need worry about, but the rest of us may hear rather a lot about it in the next couple of years. It is Euro-speak for the issue of how the EU should structure relationships between those countries that enter the single currency, and those that remain outside, after the launch date.

John Major is absolutely right to argue that this is a huge issue which has so far been virtually undiscussed in the EU. It is already clear that the birth of the Euro will create a schism in the EU of unprecedented proportions. Whether the EU can survive in anything like its present form remains an open issue.

Furthermore, whether the British political system will accept the possibility of the UK becoming a semi-detached member of the EU, with virtually no say in many of the key economic decisions being taken by the Union, is far from determined. At present, much of the political running is made by the Euro-sceptics, who permanently need placating. But imagine a situation in which the UK had opted out of a single currency, perhaps by referendum, while the rest of the EU makes a success of the venture. The boot would then be on the other foot – at every turn, the Europeans, who remain in the majority in our political elite, would be agitating for delayed UK entry.

These questions will not lie down and

slumber in the election run-up, nor least because they will need to be settled immediately after polling day. According to the Maastricht treaty, the UK needs to inform the EU whether it will exercise its opt-out rights by early 1998, possibly only eight months after the election. So it is vital we start addressing these questions now.

In some respects, the Maastricht treaty foresees the prospect of a two-tiered Union. For example, after the single currency is launched, the European Central Bank will operate in a schizophrenic manner. Although all the national central bank governors will sit on the general council, only those inside the single currency itself will sit on the governing council with voting rights. This means that Eddie George will be excluded from most important matters.

Similarly, when monetary policy inside the single currency area crops up at the Council of Ministers, non-members will be excluded from voting. Many of the questions relating to the co-ordination of fiscal policy will be treated in the same way. So there will immediately be a core club that will be involved in the determination of interest rate, exchange rate and budgetary policy for the monetary union, with the rest being instantly disenfranchised on these issues.

Many may say that the UK is scarcely enfranchised now when it comes to the monetary decisions taken by the Bundesbank. If

we continue to pursue an independent monetary strategy, why should anything change? Why not just lie back and think of the Bank of England, much as before?

This option might be economically feasible, but it will not be easy for the British political system to swallow. Whereas it might be acceptable for the UK to be just another medium-sized European country that cannot influence the Bundesbank – after all, misery loves company – the position will look radically different after monetary union. At that point, countries such as France and Holland will be enfranchised in ways that the UK is not, and the decisions taken by the inner club will undoubtedly exert great influence over our lives.

Initially, as in the 1950s, some in Britain might delude themselves that we can set ourselves up as the king-pin of the Euro-also-rans, the equivalent of Derby County in the Endsleigh League. But as in the Endsleigh League, where the sole objective of the top clubs is to gain promotion to the Premiership, so in the EU the sole objective of countries such as Italy and Spain will be to gain admission to the single currency. Quite soon, the UK could find itself as the Latvia and Portugal, surely an unbecoming fate.

And even if Westminster could reconcile itself to such a reduced status, there are other awkward questions. As the "ins" go about their business after monetary union,

they will undoubtedly deepen their economic ties in ways that are not currently foreseen, and this will slowly colour their attitude to the "outs".

Take fiscal policy, for example. It is almost certainly another British delusion to believe that a monetary union can operate for very long without extending its remit into budgetary policy. The first change that Britain will notice is that our contributions to the EU budget will be denominated in Euros instead of ecu. Not only will this be someone else's currency, but it will be a harder currency than the ecu, thereby increasing the sterling cost of our budget contributions.

In addition, strict new rules relating to national budget deficits, with a stringent system of fines, has already been proposed by Germany, and is being studied by other countries.

After monetary union, such rules are likely to be developed and policed by the "ins", with scant regard for the opinions of the "outs". Yet the financial markets may in effect force the "outs" to follow the same rules, anyway. Or, if the "outs" decide to run higher budget deficits in a recession, the "ins" might say that they should no longer be able to finance these deficits by unbridled access to the common pool of European savings. So there could be pressure for capital controls to be erected around the single currency area.

Obviously, none of this is foreseeable in any precise way. But the point is that there will be powerful new forces unleashed which will deepen the economic ties between the "ins", and tend to throw up new barriers between the "ins" and "outs". As the single market inside EMU becomes more integrated, there will inevitably be a need for closer co-operation on matters such as market regulation, social security and tax policy. This will not apply to the "outs", so invisible barriers will begin to emerge between the two classes of members.

More dangerous still, new barriers to free trade could be erected between the "ins" and "outs", particularly if the UK tries to follow the route favoured by many Tories – in effect establishing itself as a low-cost offshore Trojan horse, with low wage costs, a competitive currency, and the right to trade freely with the rest of the EU. How long will it take before the rest of the Union became impatient with this situation?

So we face a stark choice. Taking sterling into a single currency in 1999 may well be economically premature, given the large differences that still exist between the structure of our economy and the rest of the Union. Ideally, these differences should be eradicated first. But staying outside would probably carry large political costs, and may not in the end be viable. Quite a decision for the next Prime Minister to take within a month or two of the election.

The chairman charged with selling the widely despised Railtrack to the public has an environmental sales pitch. He talked to Peter Rodgers

To change image, take a green line

Bob Horton, the chairman of Railtrack, has an uphill struggle ahead of him this spring as he prepares for the £2bn privatisation planned for late May. The financial pieces of the flotation jigsaw are falling rapidly into place, but Railtrack is lumbered with a serious image problem and a strident campaign against the sale from the Labour front benches.

After the signalmen's strike in 1994, the company ranked in market research surveys as one of Britain's least popular businesses. "The dispute established a good brand name, but not a particularly good brand image," Mr Horton says, with deliberate irony.

The memory of the strike may be fading, and the fiasco of mistakes in the train timetables has been corrected in the January edition. But Mr Horton appears to be putting much thought into the reasons Railtrack, the company that owns the railway lines, the signalling systems and the stations, has taken such a pasting.

Mr Horton says: "It is a curious thing about our fellow-countrymen that though only 10 per cent travel regularly by train about 90 per cent have a visceral feeling for the railways and their part in our heritage. We have to understand the depth of emotion people feel about the railways."

The very public mauling he received at the time of the strike was perhaps a symptom of that, and it was certainly not

all his own fault. Ministers were solidly behind Mr Horton's overhaul of Railtrack's archaic price structures, some dating back to 1919, because without radical change the company would have been unsaleable on the stock market.

Mr Horton found himself the fall-guy in the front line, grilled by a parliamentary select committee and, worse still, roasted alive by the *Today* programme.

"I have no argument with John Humphreys [of *Today*] – he's there to kebab people and he did his best to. But I felt slightly bruised that the thing became personalised because I really genuinely felt – without being pompous about it – that I had come into this job to do something that would ultimately end up with a better railway."

Mr Horton insists it was absolutely right to "get rid of all those old Spanish customs, to produce a package for our employees that did not rely upon an elaborate Byzantine series of allowances and overtime".

Unpopular as the strike helped make rail privatisation, he takes a philosophical view. "One's shoulders are broad and history will vindicate what we are doing," he says. "I passionately believe that we cannot continue to cover our little island with tarmac. I really believe we cannot continue to pollute the atmosphere."

This, he admits, may sound

curious for a man who spent 35 years in the oil industry (he was previously chairman of BP). But clearly anxious to pre-empt cynical accusations to his conversion, Mr Horton says he became a convinced environmentalist during his time running BP's US operations – a period that included rival Exxon's little difficulty with the tanker *Valdez* – and he cites his behind-the-scenes but influential work for the Rio summit on the environment as a credential.

The decision on access charges leaves one big issue to be resolved before the prospectus can be finished – the amount of Railtrack's £1.7bn debt that will be written off ahead of the flotation. Mr Horton refuses to talk about the numbers in the negotiations, but says it will have to be resolved fairly quickly. "A lot is turning on that."

The higher the debt, the harder it will be to raise capital to finance future investment, which Mr

Horton has promised will be at least £1bn a year. If the Government decides new projects such as Thameslink 2000 are to go ahead, the Treasury will almost certainly agree to write off more debt to help Railtrack afford the work. The City thinks the £1.7bn might be halved.

Once that is settled, the pitch to professional investors will be simple. Mr Horton says: "We will be saying that we have a regulated utility whose forward income for the next five years and initial cost base is fairly well known. Two-thirds of the costs are contracted for, and those contracts will be exposed in the prospectus. You have an interesting company with a stable, essentially non-cyclical income stream. It will have to start with at any rate – a small supplementary stream of property and retail income."

As for private investors, who are to be offered at least 30 per cent of the shares, Mr Horton hopes to exploit that love-hate relationship among the public that has made life so difficult for Railtrack. Buyers will be urged to own a part of "their" railways.

He says: "Over the next few months we will make a con-

certed effort to explain the real benefits of privatisation. We need a better rail system, and that means we will have to be more reliable, more punctual, with cleaner trains and stations that are a pleasure to be in and travel through." The sales campaign will be announced in a month and will be aimed at more sophisticated investors than the Sids who brought into British Gas.

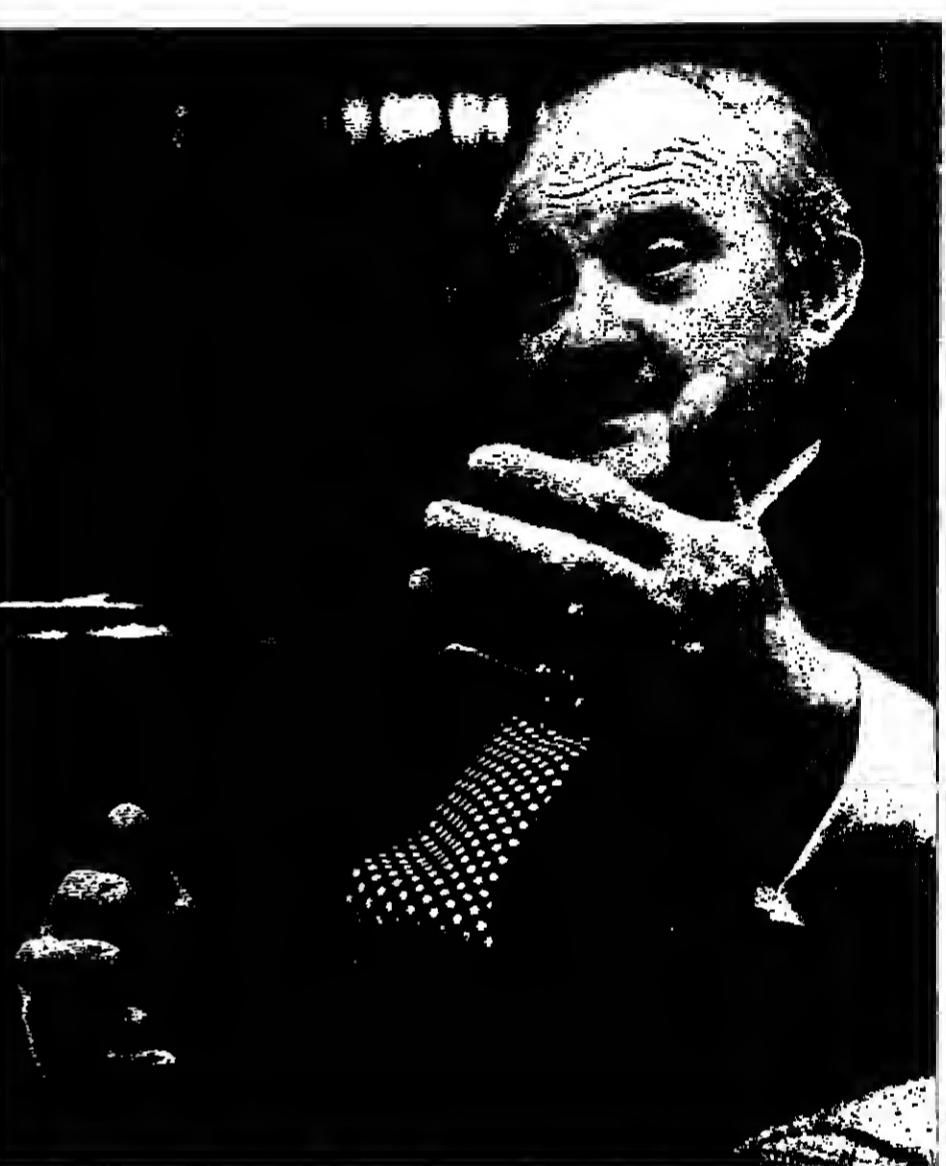
Privatisation will, Mr Horton hopes, begin a virtuous circle of investment, falling costs and rising customer numbers that will allow the costs of travelling to fall.

He believes the rail franchise companies will soon begin to press him for significant changes in the way Railtrack operates, to fill their trains.

For example, he foresees an end to the ritual weekend maintenance programmes that disrupt timetables, send trains on long detours on Sundays and deliver customers.

If the franchisees wanted an end to Sunday maintenance "my answer would be delighted, let's talk about how we can do it." The work could be done at 3 am if need be, he adds.

But with the first private franchises not due to start formal operation until next month, the prospectus will take a cautious line on prospects. "We are not going to promise what we can't deliver," Mr Horton says.



Broad shoulders: Bob Horton looks to being vindicated by history. Photograph: Jane Baker

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IN BRIEF

Third Fleming employee leaves

A third employee has left the investment bank. Robert Fleming, following an investigation by the London Stock Exchange into share dealings in the building materials group, Caradon, ahead of its half-year results last September. The employee, James Stratton, is believed to have left the firm last week. Two analysts, Derek Reed and Martin Murch, have also left. Robert Fleming in the past few days. A spokesman for the bank declined to comment yesterday. On Friday the Stock Exchange announced it had passed a report into share dealings in Caradon to the Department of Trade and Industry for consideration.

Fokker's fate in the balance

Daimler and Dutch government ministers hold separate talks today on the future of Fokker, the stricken aircraft manufacturer. The supervisory board of Germany's largest industrial group, which owns 51 per cent of Fokker, is expected to consider whether to put the Holland-based company into receivership. The German news magazine, *Der Spiegel*, reports today that a Fokker bankruptcy would threaten Daimler with 1993 losses of DM5bn (£2.5bn) rather than the DM2.3bn forecast by analysts. Daimler had sought help from the Dutch state, the other main shareholder in Fokker, but the talks collapsed.

City speculates on second Midlands bid

There was renewed speculation that Midlands Electricity is in bid talks with Tractabel, of Belgium. Midlands is already facing a bid from PowerGen, the electricity generator. General Public Utilities Corporation, of the US, is also said to have had talks with the UK company. The PowerGen offer is being considered by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Streamline to seek listing

Streamline Holdings, a 1993 management buyout from Shell, is to float on the London Stock Exchange. The company provides road services, such as highway maintenance and traffic control systems, and also has a building products division. Streamline said it expects operating profits for 1995 of £15m, on turnover of £150m.

Business confidence surges

Business optimism has picked up, according to the latest Dun & Bradstreet survey. Confidence about the prospects for new orders and exports has leapt after the fall at the end of last year.

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